



Report

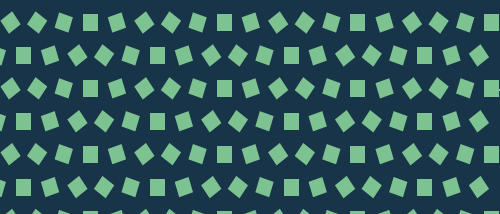
Barking and Dagenham: using data and technology to improve people's lives

November 2019



Table of contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| London borough of Barking and Dagenham | 03 |
| Key points | 03 |
| About Barking and Dagenham | 04 |
| Transforming the council | 05 |
| Finding the right people | 05 |
| The social progress index | 06 |
| New ways of working | 06 |
| Reorganising for solutions | 07 |
| Next steps | 07 |
| Doing better work with data | 07 |
| Social and organisational challenges | 08 |
| Outlining a new strategy | 08 |
| References | 09 |



London borough of Barking and Dagenham

www.lbdd.gov.uk



Chris Naylor

*Chief executive at London
borough of Barking
and Dagenham*

Key points

- Barking and Dagenham, one of the most deprived London boroughs, has made extensive use of data in tackling problems.
- The borough has built a social progress index, measuring each of its wards in dozens of ways and launching locally-targeted services as a result.
- Its data work includes identifying and supporting 237 children removed and placed in local authority care from just 71 mothers.
- Barking and Dagenham has implemented technology allowing staff to work flexibly and remotely, allowing it to reduce office space, and has reorganised 17 services into one 'Community Solutions' department.
- Chief executive Chris Naylor has invited technology suppliers to propose ways to tackle the borough's specific problems, such as domestic abuse.

About Barking and Dagenham

On several measures, Barking and Dagenham is more deprived than most of the rest of London. An east London borough, bounded by the Thames to the south and the boroughs of Newham, Redbridge and Havering to the west, north-west and east respectively, it was home to 212,000 people as of mid-2018, 23% more than a decade previously.¹

In the 2011 Census, among the capital's 33 local authority areas, only Havering had a lower proportion of residents with post-school level four qualification and only Hackney and Islington had residents with higher levels of bad or very bad health. In 2010-12, only Tower Hamlets had a lower age of death for men, (77.6 years compared with 77.1 years), while men in Kensington and Chelsea lived 4.5 years longer at 82.1 years. The borough had the lowest age of death for women in the capital of 82 years, although with a smaller gap of 2.9 years to the highest, Richmond.

More recently-updated economic data paints a similar picture. In 2017, the economic gross value added by workplaces in Barking and Dagenham and Havering was £19,440 per person, just two-fifths of the London average and higher than only the Bexley and Greenwich and Redbridge and Waltham Forest areas.

"It's a bit of up north, down south," chief executive Chris Naylor told the Socitm-supported Share Digital event held at the National Motorcycle Museum on 7 March 2019.² He grew up in Rotherham, South Yorkshire and said it has a lot in common with the London borough he works for, both being formerly-industrialised urban areas with a big white working-class population.

The London borough has a particularly obvious symbol of industrial decline, although one that still employs some people: Ford's Dagenham plant produced its first vehicles in 1932 and employed 40,000 at its peak in 1953, but it stopped making vehicles in 2002 and now employs just 1,830 people manufacturing engines.³

Figure 1. How the borough compares

| | Barking and Dagenham | All Greater London | All UK |
|--|----------------------|--------------------|---------|
| Population growth 2008-2018 | 23% | 14% | 7.5% |
| Average age | 33.4 | 35.6 | 39 |
| Residents in bad or very bad health | 6.1% | 4.9% | 5.6% |
| Born abroad | 30.9% | 36.7% | 12.7% |
| Level 4 (post-school) educated | 20.9% | 37.7% | 27% |
| Workplace gross value added (GVA) per person (also including Havering) | £19,440 | £47,705 | £27,430 |
| 10-year GVA per capita change | Up 10% | Up 27% | Up 21% |
| Unemployment | 3.6% | 2.6% | 2.7% |

Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS)

In its local context, Office for National Statistics data shows that Barking & Dagenham differs significantly from its neighbour Newham. Both boroughs cover 36 square kilometres of the capital outside its commercial centre, but Newham has a significantly higher population (348,000 in mid-2017), who are on average younger, more likely to be born outside the UK and more likely to be degree-educated than the UK average. Workplace gross value added data for Newham and Hackney is £24,700 per person, 25% higher than Barking and Dagenham and Havering. And neither compares to central London – the figure for Tower Hamlets, including Canary Wharf and its surroundings, is £96,300, while the City of London and Camden have the UK's highest figure of £336,300.

Continuing his presentation, Naylor added that the borough is also at or near the bottom of the London league table on measures including A-level results and homelessness, and that there is significant population churn – some parts of the borough have seen more than 90% turnover between 2011 and 2019 – and a large proportion of younger people. Its population has grown by nearly a quarter in the last decade, fast even by the standards of the capital.

Barking and Dagenham has advantages in its location and environment, including 25 minutes' travel time to central London, new economic growth elsewhere in east London and space for 50,000 to 60,000 new homes. But seizing these economic opportunities meant the council would have to serve its residents in new ways.

"The conclusion we came to four or five years ago was that no-one is coming to the rescue," Naylor said. "If inclusive growth is our strategy, then we really need to pay attention to the condition of our people... What we find are a set of people with whom we need to have a completely different relationship, if we are going to change the conditions of their lives." This aspiration was encapsulated by the borough in its 2017 manifesto, based on consultation with approximately 3,000 residents, which started with a vision statement of "One borough. One community. No-one left behind."⁴

He showed the Share Digital event a chart he called 'the graphic equaliser of doom' showing the relative position of the borough at or near the bottom of

a wide range of indicators: "We can have all the growth we like, but while our folk are languishing at the bottom of that chart it will pass them by."

Barking and Dagenham sees this work as creating a 'new kind of council' which focuses on creating the conditions, partnerships and services that support improvements in the lives of its residents. It sees use of data, behavioural insight and innovative approaches to service design as essential building blocks in achieving these improvements.⁵

Transforming the council

Finding the right people

Naylor joined Barking and Dagenham as chief executive in early 2015. He has made significant use of data in service transformation, using versions of the graphic equaliser graph in presentations to all 3,000 staff at an early stage to make his case for change. "Data, understanding where people are in their lives, but more importantly the causes of why folk are languishing at the bottom of that chart becomes an absolute imperative for us and we had to do something about it," he said.

In his presentation to Share Digital, Naylor said that a key task is identifying the people who most need the council's assistance. He told the audience about two examples of how bad he felt local authorities often are at this, the first being that the all five of the London boroughs he has worked for have all insisted on seeing a paper copy of applicants' council tax bills in the process of issuing a parking permit, despite the fact that the bills were issued by the council in the first place. When he told colleagues that Barking and Dagenham should digitise the process, he was told it had done this – by letting people scan the bill and send it electronically. In other words, the council prints a bill from digital information, posts it, then asks citizens to re-digitise it as an image and send it back: "We have got to get this sorted, otherwise we are toast," he told the event.

More seriously, he highlighted the issue of looked-after children in care, each of whom costs the council £120,000 annually and may require such care for their entire childhood. Barking and Dagenham found that 71 women had given birth to 237 children, each of whom the council had taken into care, often when just a few days' old.

Naylor said this shows how data can play a vital role. The council has established a data explorer, a repository of information on people in the borough, to support this work. But transformed services are required to follow up on the insights data generates, in particular to support those most at risk. Of the 71 women the council identified, many give birth to another child in subsequent years, who were similarly taken into care. "The women in question are often traumatised," Naylor said, adding that the council effectively compounds that trauma by removing their children. "The last people they want to speak to are the council that keeps taking their children off them." The council now uses data to identify people with problems, along with targeted work to help them.

The social progress index

A specific data project, focused on areas rather than individuals, is the borough's social progress index (SPI) for wards. This provides an overall calculation and a 'rag' (red, amber or green) rating for dozens of factors under three main headings:

- Basic human needs: nutrition and basic medical care (including premature mortality and use of foodbanks); water and sanitation; shelter (including homelessness and housing benefit take-up); and personal safety (including domestic abuse).
- Foundations of wellbeing: access to basic knowledge (based mainly on pupil attainment data); access to information and communications (including average broadband speed and registered library users); health and wellness (including obesity); and environmental quality (including air pollution).
- Opportunity: personal rights (including household ownership and voter turn-out); personal freedom and choice (including teenage pregnancy and benefit

claimants); inclusiveness (including racist hate crimes and volunteering); and access to advanced education (using data on post-school education).

Naylor says the SPI has been used to identify Heath ward, just north of the centre of Dagenham, as an area with particularly high deprivation, high unemployment and low income. In January 2019 the borough set up a community food club exclusively for residents of Heath ward, using the existing William Bellamy children's centre. This provides around £20 of groceries for a payment of £3.50, as well as advice on finance, health, employability and skills and access to a community garden. The club has helped find residents with serious problems such as high debts, allowing the council to provide support, and has since been expanded to cover five wards in the borough from two more sites.⁶

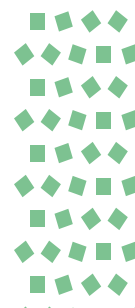
The first community food club has worked with more than 50 families and as of end-September has avoided spending of at least £300,000 on statutory homelessness duty.⁷ SPI has also been used to choose target areas for B&D Energy, a low-carbon energy provider owned by the council, based on locating the worst areas of fuel poverty.⁸

New ways of working

Faced with the challenges of creating a new kind of council at the same time as making £63 million in savings between 2015 and 2021, Naylor said the council rejected 'salami slicing' in favour of bold uses of technology to change the way it worked. To this end it established its New Ways of Working (NWoW) programme, which makes extensive use of technology to cut accommodation costs, allow flexible working and help people work together.

The programme started in 2016 by providing new laptops for 3,500 staff, and the following year it focused on encouraging them to make full use of Microsoft Office 365 to share and work in new ways. In 2019 it is moving staff to Microsoft Teams with the aim of encouraging collaborative work, and SharePoint and a replacement for shared drives as a store for files.

NWoW has a particular focus on reducing the amount of office space used by the council, using technology as its main tool to do so. It has split staff into four



groups: fixed desk workers who require a dedicated workstation; flexible workers who use laptops and flexi-desks in offices; nomadic workers who use laptops in a range of locations and a flexi-desk when in a council office; and manual workers who need only occasional IT access. The majority of staff are flexible workers and the council currently provides six desks per 10 workers, but is aiming to move to just three desks per 10 workers by making greater use of remote working, virtual team meetings and Skype.

The borough says it has made significant progress, with the majority of staff in the borough's town hall and its Roycraft House office now flexible workers, 79% of staff saying they feel comfortable using Skype and the parking appeals team having doubled productivity by getting staff to work four days a week from home.

Reorganising for solutions

In 2017 Naylor reorganised the council, including the creation of a 'Community Solutions' service, which brings together a number of different services to take a holistic approach to supporting those residents who need the council's help. "This was very much our service structural response to this question of how do you understand the root cause of what is happening in people's lives," he said.

Previously, when someone presented themselves as homeless, the relevant team in the housing department would apply a statutory test, and if this was passed find a property that was likely to be expensive for the council, not very nice and often geographically remote for the individual, he said. "Now people come to 'Community Solutions' and the very first question we then ask is, why are you homeless? What is happening in your life that has caused this to happen?" In cases where someone cannot afford a rent rise because they cannot work more hours, the council may be able to help with childcare and support services in areas such as domestic abuse, drug and alcohol dependency and mental health. The result may be to keep people in their own homes, a better outcome for both the individual and the borough.

Next steps

Doing better work with data

Naylor believes the 2017 reorganisation represents a good start that has created capability and capacity for change, but is not in itself sufficient. "We now need to inject that model with some fresh thinking and fresh ideas. To make it work, in my view, we need to mission-orientate it around goals that the data tells us are pivotal in people's lives," he said.

The council says it is committed to developing and implementing data models and tools that will help it better understand current and future demand for services. These will enable better informed, targeted and earlier interventions based on predictive data, preventing problems from deepening and requiring costly crisis support and improving resident outcomes and quality of life.

One issue the council is facing is the public sector's general competence in gathering and joining up data on citizens, when compared with companies such as Tesco: "The question is what does the public sector version of that look like, that doesn't involve us having to knock on people's doors and ask?" One way is to join up data from different agencies, something Naylor said he has helped to get started by asking chairpeople or chief executives himself, and being willing to settle for good data that can generate a hypothesis, rather than perfect real-time information. The council is working with local health and social care providers and Care City, an innovation organisation, on combining datasets to explore troubled families and social isolation. Data on the latter has found that teenage mothers are among the most socially isolated, revealing a group who could benefit from help.⁹

Pye Nyunt, the borough's head of insight and innovation, said that timeliness is one of the issues faced by his team in using data analytics to "disrupt the way the council thinks," something included in his job description. Speaking at a presentation hosted by innovation charity Nesta in March, he said that councils need to track how people's behaviours are changing, but currently do so largely with data from the 2011 census. "A lot happens

in 10 years,” said Nyunt, referring to the borough’s rapid population growth. “If we’re trying to design from data what those services should look like for our new population, it’s quite difficult to do that when the best dataset you’ve got occurs every 10 years.”

Nyunt added that public authorities also need to consider how changes in society and technology are providing new sources of data. When an adult, his very young son may use cryptocurrencies, autonomous vehicles and work in digital gig economy jobs. “The challenge for government is what will these new, emerging technologies provide in terms of data so we understand human behaviour,” he said. “We need to understand our data so that we can build services for the next generation we’re about to serve.”

Social and organisational challenges

In his Share Digital presentation in March, Naylor outlined some problems specific to the borough. In 2006, residents of Barking and Dagenham elected 12 British National Party candidates from 13 who stood; Naylor said that if the party had put up candidates for all 51 councillors it could well have controlled the council. (The seats were all won by Labour in 2010.) “What we take from that is that people were so disillusioned and disconnected that they figured the best answer to that was vote for Nazis,” Naylor told the event. The borough has recently carried out research with older white working-class residents – one said “there’s no point even being racist any more”. Naylor said that the borough has set up a scheme that encourages residents to get involved in their communities, with the Participatory City Foundation, a charity.¹⁰

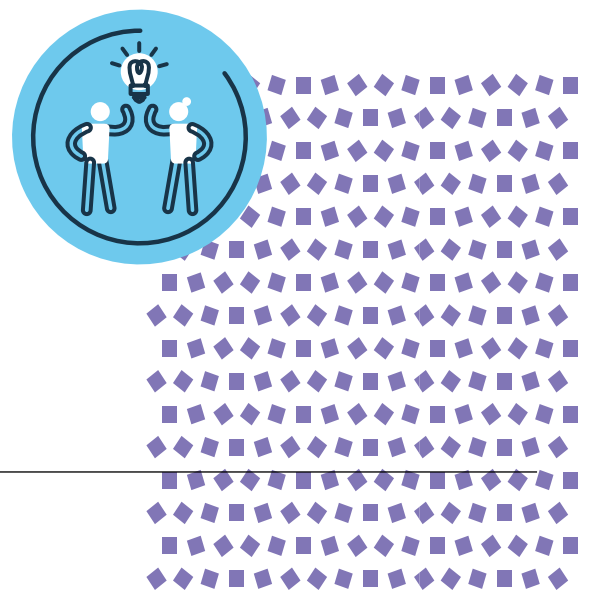
Internally, some of the borough’s staff have not changed the way they think about things, Naylor said, blaming himself: “This is on me. The mission to some extent reflects a failure of strategy and that strategy needs to be born from data and insight.” He compared the problem to Nokia’s inability to transform itself sufficiently when faced with Apple’s iPhone, leading to its exit from the mobile handset market despite its strong record.

Outlining a new strategy

Naylor said that Barking and Dagenham requires a new strategy for ICT, which must be focused on supporting the borough’s people, not technologies. “Talk to me about the mission we’re on and how you can help me do that,” he told the Share Digital audience.

Data will lead this mission. One ward in Barking and Dagenham has the highest levels of domestic abuse of any in London and given only a small proportion of incidents are thought to be reported, Naylor said this suggests an epidemic of violence and control in its homes. Other data suggests that one in 30 women in the borough have been subjected to female genital mutilation (FGM), and that women’s healthy life expectancy is just 53 years. In answer to a 2017 survey question of year 10 students, 26% of respondents agreed with the statement that it is “sometimes acceptable to hit your partner”. Rather than economic growth, “it turns out that what we need to focus on in Barking and Dagenham is improving the life chances of women and girls, and if we get that right, we get it right for everybody else,” Naylor said.

An ICT strategy that supports this goal is not yet clear, but Naylor provided an example of what it might include in the shape of the Noyo (Not on your own) app developed by a local social enterprise.¹¹ This allows people to report incidents of sexual harassment and assault, allowing the borough to act on these. “We didn’t commission this, they just scratch-built it, put it out there and people are starting to use it,” he said. Major suppliers should think along the same lines, he said: “Start thinking about what my mission is and offer me what I need.”



References

Sources

This report is based primarily on a presentation given by Chris Naylor to the Share Digital event at the National Motorcycle Museum on 7 March 2019. It includes material from presentations given by Pye Nyunt and Darren Rose, both of Barking and Dagenham, at a meeting with Socitm on 27 February 2019, as well as a presentation by Pye Nyunt to Nesta in March 2019.¹² It also draws on data from the Office for National Statistics, material from media reports and corporate websites, and additional material provided by the council.

Appendix

¹ All data in this section and the table are from the Office for National Statistics. Population data is for June 2018; average age, health, place of birth and education are from the 2011 Census; average ages of death are for 2010-12; gross value-added economic data is for 2017; and the unemployment data is for March 2019.

² All quotes from Chris Naylor are from his Share Digital presentation, 7 March 2019.

³ 'Ford Dagenham at 80', Ford Motor Company, 13 May 2009, via Archive.org, <https://bit.ly/2qRpzuf>; and 'Dagenham Engine Plant', Ford Motor Company, accessed August 2019: <https://ford.to/2CjvhB8>

⁴ 'Barking and Dagenham together', Barking and Dagenham website, July 2017: <https://bit.ly/2Qlb2l5>

⁵ London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Corporate Plan 2018-22: <https://bit.ly/32Olfjo>

⁶ 'Barking and Dagenham launches community food club, Barking and Dagenham Post, 28 January 2019, <https://bit.ly/3542xiq>; and 'Community food clubs', Barking and Dagenham website, accessed August 2019: <https://bit.ly/377vUSP>

⁷ Information from Barking and Dagenham, October 2019.

⁸ B&D Energy website, accessed August 2019: <https://bit.ly/2NLHPOy>

⁹ Care City website, accessed August 2019: <https://bit.ly/2qVUqWo>

¹⁰ 'Made to measure', Participatory City website, accessed August 2019: <https://bit.ly/2QjqNJC>

¹¹ 'Noyo', Google Play, accessed August 2019: <http://bit.ly/2TRvHQI>

¹² 'How can data help local authorities?' presentation by Pye Nyunt for Nesta Sparks, published 12 March 2019, YouTube: <http://bit.ly/2Xd2jDb>

About this report

Author

SA Mathieson - Writer and Analyst

Editor

Marianne Lansley - Communications Manager

Designers

Magdalena Werner - Senior Creative Designer

Benjamin Hughes - Graphic Designer

Have your say

We always welcome feedback and discussion on the contents of our publications.

Martin Ferguson

Director of Research and Policy
martin.ferguson@socitm.net

Nadira Hussain

Director of Leadership Development and Research
nadira.hussain@socitm.net

Get in touch

Website: www.socitm.net
Email: inform@socitm.net
Tel: 01604 709456



Join the conversation...



@Socitm



Socitm