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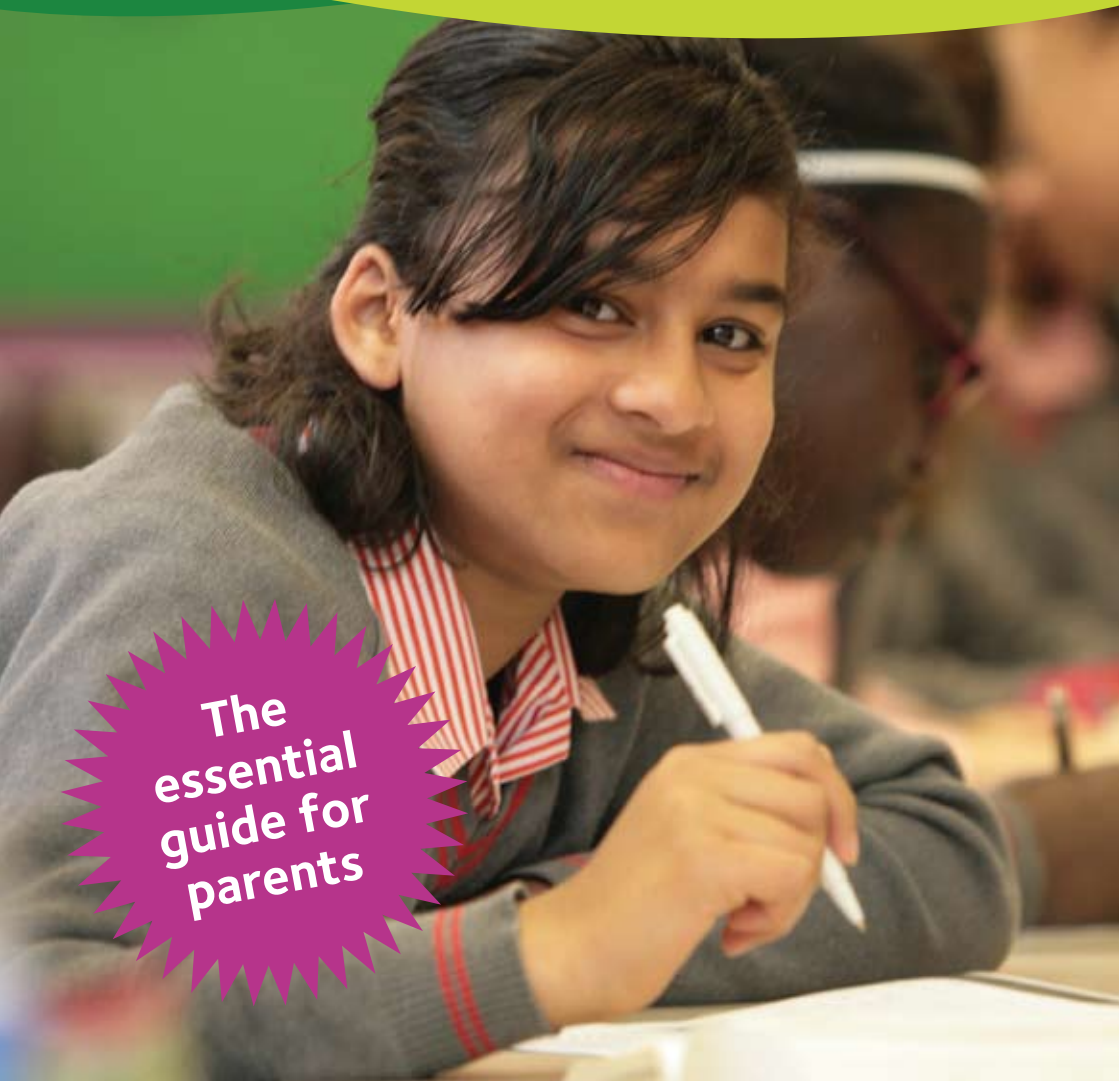
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Starting secondary school in Islington

A young girl with dark hair, wearing a grey school sweater over a red and white striped shirt, is sitting at a desk in a classroom. She is smiling and looking towards the camera, holding a white pen in her right hand. The background is slightly blurred, showing other students and a green wall.

**The
essential
guide for
parents**

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Welcome

Starting secondary school is a big step. Your child will be moving from being one of the oldest in a relatively small school to being one of the youngest in a much bigger school. Some children will be moving with friends and classmates from primary school, and others may not know anyone in their new school. For all of them, there will be a lot to take in and learn, particularly in the first few weeks.

We want all children in Islington schools to do as well as they can, and to make the most of their talents so they are prepared for life when they leave school. This booklet will give you some background about the differences between primary school and secondary school, and what your child will be learning at their new school. There are also plenty of handy tips to help you and your child through the transition.

The move to secondary school comes at the same time as your child is becoming more independent. Being a parent to a teenager will bring with it quite different experiences from when your child was younger, so Islington's secondary schools can help support and guide you as a parent. Plus we've put together a list of useful contacts to support you – see page 26.





Things to know about secondary school

Secondary school is different from primary school in a number of different ways. Your child's new school will be much bigger, with more pupils and more staff, and they'll come into contact with pupils much older than them.

Every secondary school in the borough has its own rules on behaviour, but they all have a strong focus on good manners and respect, and all

our schools share a commitment to children's safety and security. Your child will be expected to take their lessons and their behaviour seriously,

and show respect to staff and fellow pupils. To find out more about what your child will be learning at their new school, turn to page 16.

Who's who at school

Your child will come in to contact with many more members of staff than at primary school, so here's a handy guide to who's who at their new school.

Head teacher, deputy head teacher and assistant head teacher(s)

The head teacher runs the school, helped by the deputy and assistant head teachers. It is common for the deputy and assistant head teachers to each be responsible for a particular aspect of school life, for example, the curriculum or pastoral support. They will also teach some lessons.

School office

This is the first port of call if you want to contact a teacher. The school office will pass on your message if the teacher is unavailable and can tell you the best time to contact them.

Form tutor

Your child will be part of a tutor group, which they may stay in for some lessons, but not all. The form tutor gets to know your child well, and is usually the first member of school staff to speak to if you have a concern.

Head of Year

The Head of Year 7 has overall responsibility for the progress and welfare of all children in that year.

Learning mentor

Learning mentors work with individuals or small groups of children who need extra help, usually those with special educational needs, emotional difficulties or behavioural problems.

Bilingual parent support adviser

They help parents and families of children whose first language is not English. They can translate and help parents be involved in their children's education.

School home support worker

Some secondary schools have a school home support worker, who works particularly with any families whose children are not attending school regularly.

Your child will have contact with lots of staff.





School health adviser

Once known as a school nurse, a school health adviser can give you and your child information about all health matters, and can refer your child to outside help. Many run drop-in sessions for pupils at lunchtime.

Out-of-school-hours coordinator

This person organises the activities that take place outside school hours, ie before and after the school day, during lunchtimes, and sometimes over weekends and holidays.

Education welfare officer (EWO)

EWOs work with families and school staff if a child's learning is suffering because they are not going to school every day or on time.

Educational psychologist

Educational psychologists come into schools to help children who are having particular difficulties with their learning in school. They work with children, teachers and families.

Safer schools officer

All Islington secondary schools have a safer schools officer, who is a police officer based at the school to offer advice and to help ensure children's safety. Your child will see them walking around the school, playground and dinner hall.

Connexions personal adviser (Connexions PAs)

Connexions PAs help 13-19 year olds to make decisions about their next steps in education and training, careers and employment.

Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO)

SENCOs are responsible for making sure children with special educational needs receive the help they need at school.

Gifted and Talented Coordinator

Some children excel in particular areas or learn faster than others. To find out how to

identify if your child is gifted and talented, and what extra educational support is available, you should speak to the head of year.

Ethnic minority achievement (EMA) coordinator

Some schools will have an EMA coordinator whose role is to ensure that children from minority ethnic communities are able to achieve their full potential at school.

Pastoral support team

All schools have a pastoral support system. That usually means a senior member of staff is responsible for a team looking after the personal and emotional needs of students. Staff will contact parents if they have concerns about a child and talk to them about ways to help.

Attendance and holidays



Going to school every day is very important for children's education and friendships.

Every day matters

Children who miss school regularly find it difficult to keep up with schoolwork and can start falling behind. Plus, missing out on the social side can make it more difficult for children to make and keep friends,

especially when they've first started at secondary school. Just think – if a child misses two weeks of school each year, they will have missed out on almost a whole year by the time they finish school!

It's part of every day matters as a parent, it's your responsibility to make sure your child attends school regularly and it's an offence to fail to do so. Sometimes, though, for a number of reasons, a parent can find it difficult to get

their children to school every day. If you are struggling to ensure your child attends school each day, whatever the reason, talk to the form tutor or head of year.

Be on time

It is also important that your child arrives at school on time. They must be there for morning registration, and again after lunch, or they may be marked as absent.

Sickness

If your child is ill contact the school on the first morning of your child's illness. If your child has to visit a doctor or dentist, try to make an appointment after school or during the holidays. If it has to be during school time, always let the school know.

Taking holidays

We want all children in Islington to get the best possible education, so our policy is to not

authorise term-time holidays other than in very exceptional circumstances. If there's a reason you want to take your child out of school during term-time, even if it is for just one day, speak to the head teacher first.

Only schools can authorise absences. If they do not, and you still take your child out of school, you will face an automatic fine of £100 from Islington Council. Failure to pay this will lead to prosecution, which could result in a fine of up to £2,500, a jail sentence of up to three months or a community sentence.





Keeping in touch and getting involved

While your child's been at primary school, it's probably been quite easy to keep in touch with the school and your child's teacher. It is just as important to have a good relationship with their new school, but it can be harder to do so. The school may be further away, your child has more teachers, and every teacher has more children to teach. But our secondary schools want to make sure you know how your child is getting on, and that you feel able to contact them if you need to.

This section gives you an overview of some of the ways you can keep in touch with the school, as well as ways in which you can get more involved.

Keeping up to date

The school will keep you informed about how your child is getting on, and will send you at least one written report on your child's progress each year. They will often send you letters about other things to parents via your child, so check they give you everything they're supposed to, and that there aren't letters sitting in the bottom of their bag for weeks! Most Islington schools produce regular newsletters, too and you may be able to get up-to-date news about the school, including activities and events, through their website.

Parents' evenings

As well as parents' evenings, most Islington secondary schools will ask you to attend academic reviews with your child two or three times a year. The teachers will talk to you about your child's progress and targets, and you can find out more

about what they do in class. You can raise any queries or concerns you have at these sessions, or for more urgent matters, speak to your child's form tutor.

Form tutor

As your child's form tutor is your main contact at the school, it's a good idea for you to make a note of their school phone number or email address, so you can contact them if you need to. You should sign your child's homework diary regularly to confirm that your child has done their homework. You can write notes to the teachers in here if you need information or have any concerns. And don't forget that a good way to keep informed about what's going on at school is to ask your child about school and how their day has been.

Getting involved

There are plenty of opportunities to get involved at school.

The school will put on a number of events throughout the year, like concerts and plays. It's really encouraging for your child if you to go to these, especially if they have a role in them. The school will probably also arrange fairs, festivals, workshops or courses for parents.

Volunteering

You may want to join the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), which often organises social events and fundraising activities. Or perhaps you'd be interested in joining the school's governing body, which is responsible for setting the direction of the school and monitoring its performance. Parent governors are elected by parents of children at the school for a term of four years. If you are interested in becoming a governor, speak to the head teacher, who will be able to give you more information.

Helping your child settle in

Most children settle into secondary school within a few weeks. Some children, however, find it much tougher. Here are some top tips to help them settle in if they're still finding it hard after a few weeks.

- Keep talking to your child about how they are getting on, and take time to listen, even if it takes a while for them to talk to you. They might not want to talk much at first, so be patient.
- Remind them that other children who may appear very confident may also feel as nervous as anyone else.
- Be positive. Encourage your child to think of something good that happened at school, and make sure their after-school time is enjoyable.
- Don't panic. The vast majority of children have a happy and fulfilled time at school even if it's a bit of a struggle at first.

It's good to listen and talk to your child.

If your child continues to have difficulty with their learning, relationships or behaviour at school, or if you are finding life at home difficult, ask to speak to their form tutor or head of year. By working together, schools and parents can make sure that children get the help they need in order to thrive.

Some children find it difficult to adapt to new school rules. Helping your child understand these rules is one important way you can help your child settle in.



Living with a teenager

Moving to secondary school is only one of many changes that will be happening to your child in the next few years as they make the transition from a child to a teenager. It will probably feel like your child is growing up at a faster rate than before, both emotionally and physically, and it's likely your relationship with them will change.

Many children go through this stage in their life with few problems or anxieties, but be prepared for problems that may arise.

You may find it difficult to talk to them, and they may not want to talk to you about what is going on at school or with their friends. But it's good to keep talking to them, as well as giving them space and privacy. Most important is to make it clear that you are always willing to listen and talk about anything that's worrying them.

There is a lot of information, advice and support around to help you through what can be a difficult time. To find out what is available near where you live, contact the Islington Family Information Service on 020 7527 5959, or visit their website at www.islington.gov.uk/fis. There is more about the service and other useful contacts at the back of this booklet from page 25.

Learning

As in primary school, your child's learning is set by the National Curriculum. This sets out the knowledge and skills that every pupil should learn, and also sets standards that measure how well children are doing in each subject.

What your child will learn

The core subjects in Key Stage 3 (Years 7 to 9) are: English, Mathematics Science, Design and, Technology, Information and Communication Technology, History, Geography, Modern Foreign Languages, Art and Design, Music

Physical Education, Citizenship and Religious Education. Schools also have to provide careers education and guidance, sex and relationship education (SRE).

If you have concerns about your child

taking part in Religious Education lessons or SRE, you should talk to their form tutor or head of year.

At the end of each year, the teachers will assess the progress your child has made during the year.

Age	Year	Stage	Secondary school
11-12	Year 7	Key Stage 3	
12-13	Year 8		
13-14	Year 9		
14-15	Year 10	Key Stage 4	
15-16	Year 11		

Homework

Homework at secondary school is very different from at primary school, and can come as a bit of a shock. The Government recommends between 45 and 90 minutes a night for children in Years 7 and 8, covering several subjects. Your child will need to get used to a new homework routine, and this is where you can really help.

The Government recommend 45 to 90 minutes a night

After a few weeks or so, most children will have got used to the new routine and will just need your encouragement and praise every so often. There is help available if they, or you, are finding it a struggle, so do talk to the form tutor or head of year.

If you want to support your child's learning, but aren't sure how, ask at school if there are any classes for parents. The council also runs a fantastic range of family learning courses – find out more by calling 020 7527 5782.

Here are some tips to help you and your

child overcome some common problems:

It's a struggle to get them started on homework.

It's good to help them to into a routine from the start, which may mean needing to be strict. It's easy to let children skip homework, particularly if they're tired in the first few weeks. But it's really important you encourage them, giving them lots of praise when they try hard, and complete their homework on time.

Take time and effort to help your child establish a routine that suits them and you. It might be that you encourage them

to do their homework when they first come home before you have your evening meal, so they can then relax and watch TV, or do other activities afterwards.

They are always listening to music.

Many young people like to listen to music while they work – don't worry about this, as it can really help them to focus.



Your child may like to do homework at a homework club or library.

There's nowhere for them to do their homework.

If you have more than one child, consider if they need to work in separate rooms or can work together. Your child may prefer to go to a homework club, which many Islington schools

(and some libraries and community centres) run after school. All Islington's libraries have rooms for quiet working, as well as computers with internet access. To find out where your local library is, visit www.islington.gov.uk/findmynearest

I don't know whether to help them with their homework.

It's fine to help your child with their homework sometimes – it doesn't mean they won't learn how to do it themselves. Talk to them about how to plan their work, and help them to think about different places to find

the information they need, such as books, newspapers or the internet.

My child is getting fed up with a particular piece of homework or particular subject.

Listen to them to find out why they are upset, so that you or their teacher can help. It might be because they don't understand what to do, or they just don't enjoy the subject. Sometimes it helps children be more productive if they take a break from homework and return to it later.

I don't know if my child is doing the right amount of homework.

If you're concerned your child is not doing enough, or doing too much, talk to them about it. If necessary, speak to their form tutor.

My child's being argumentative about doing their homework.

Make sure you know what homework they're supposed to be doing, and then you can explain that you expect them to do it, and that there will be consequences if they don't. Sometimes it can help if you take a step back, and let them take responsibility. Perhaps your child simply needs a chance to set their own routine.

I'm worried my child won't have a life outside homework.

Don't let friends and other after-school activities get squeezed out. In the early weeks and months of secondary school, making new friends and finding out which after-school clubs and activities suit them are just as important.

Out-of-school activities

It's important that your child has other things to do as well as schoolwork. This is easy to arrange, as all secondary schools in Islington put on activities after school, with many also offering activities before school, at lunchtime, and even at weekends and in holidays

Activities offered in Islington schools include cookery, gardening, sports, languages, dance, drama, art, music and ICT. They will usually be on school premises, but also take place in other venues, such as sports centres. Schools also run homework clubs, and catch-up sessions and revision.

Attending these additional activities can help children enjoy school more, learn better and increase their confidence. They will have the chance to try different activities,

learn new skills, make friends with children from other classes and year groups, and to work with different adults, often in smaller groups.

Some schools publish a timetable of after-school activities at the beginning of each term, while others post a list of clubs on their website or in their newsletter. For more information about the out-of-school hours activities your child could take part in, ask their form tutor or head of year.



Things to do in Islington

As well as the clubs at school, there are loads of things to do and places to go in every part of the borough – youth clubs, music, dance and drama, sports, swimming, martial arts, gyms, youth projects, adventure playgrounds, libraries, scouts and guides, and the Duke of Edinburgh

Award Scheme, among others. For an up-to-date list of things to do for young people in Islington, contact the Family Information Service on 020 7527 5959 or go to www.islington.gov.uk/fis.

During the holidays

There are even more things going on for

children and young people during the holidays, especially in the summer. Check out our Heatwave magazine and the Summer University programme, which all Islington schools will give to pupils before the summer holidays. Or you can find it online at www.islington.gov.uk/heatwave

**It's important
your child has
things to do
other than
schoolwork.**



Bullying

Some parents and children worry that secondary schools are big, scary places where they might get bullied. So here's the good news: children at Islington's secondary schools tell us they feel safe and that school staff deal quickly and effectively with bullying. We encourage all pupils to report any bullying they experience or see, and the schools have systems in place so they can do so safely.

Of course that doesn't mean that no one is ever bullied at school, but it does mean that we take it very seriously. Islington schools will not tolerate bullying, and they work with families, the council, the police and the local community to make

Islington a 'bully-free zone'. All schools have an anti-bullying policy, which you can ask to see.

What is bullying?

Bullying is when someone repeatedly and deliberately hurts another person, physically, verbally or mentally, or makes them unhappy over a period of time. This can take place in or out of school. It is never acceptable, and nobody should have to deal with it on their own.

Bullying can also happen using mobile phones and computers. This is often hard to spot and can be more difficult to stop than other forms of bullying. Nasty messages can be easily passed around or things are posted online so lots of people can see them.

Signs of bullying

Children and young people will often hide the fact they're being bullied from family and teachers, so it's

good to be aware of some tell-tale signs. These are some of the ways that bullying can affect children:

- getting miserable on Sunday nights
- often hungry (a sign that someone may be taking their lunch money)
- frequent unexplained illnesses, or wanting to stay home from school
- not sleeping well
- coming home with unexplained injuries, or with belongings or money lost or damaged
- not wanting to see friends, or becoming quiet and withdrawn
- drop in standards of work at school.

Of course, teenagers are changing all the time, so these don't necessarily mean your child is being bullied. If you are worried that your child may be being bullied, try to talk with them about it calmly. »



If your child is being bullied

- Listen carefully and talk through some possible ways to deal with the problem.
- Don't delay – contact the school immediately. Talk to your child's form tutor, but if it doesn't get better, speak to the head of year.
- Talk to your child about safe ways to protect themselves.
- Don't suggest fighting back. This generally only makes the problem worse.
- Keep a written record of everything that is happening (time, place, names, any witnesses) and of the action you have taken. If your child is injured as a result of bullying, keep a doctor's record or photograph the injury.
- Don't take matters into your own hands by confronting the bully or their parents directly.

Phone bullying

- If your child is being bullied through their mobile phone, they could change their number. Some phone companies will let you do this free of charge.
- They should give their number to family and friends only, and ask friends not to pass it around.

What to tell your child

- Never reply to an abusive text.
- If you don't recognise the caller ID, or it comes up as unknown or withheld, let it go to voicemail.
- Keep abusive texts or pictures as evidence.
- Tell an adult if you are worried or scared.

If you're worried your child is involved in bullying

No one likes to think their child might be a bully, but if you think your child might be involved in bullying, there are some ways to stop:

- Ask them for their side of the story.
- Make clear that you think bullying is unacceptable.
- Contact the school immediately. Discuss with your child's form tutor ways to help your child to change his or her behaviour.
- If the situation is serious, you may want to get help for your child. Ask the school to get in touch with their educational psychologist, or you can speak to your GP.

INFORMATION

Islington Family Information Service

If you are looking for childcare, parenting and family support, things to do with your children, or help to get back into work, the Islington Family Information Service will point you in the right direction. The service is completely free.



Call our team of friendly advisers on
020 7527 5959 visit www.islington.gov.uk/fis
or email fis@islington.gov.uk

Useful contacts

All these organisations provide support for Islington families.

Centre 404 Family Support

This is part of a parent-led organisation providing advocacy, support and information to parents of children with special needs and disabilities. There are several parent groups meeting at Centre 404, including a parents' coffee morning, a Turkish mothers' group and a breakfast club.

T: 020 7697 1325

W: www.centre404.org.uk

Community Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

CAMHS provides specialist assessment and treatment services for children and adolescents with emotional, behavioural and/or developmental difficulties and disorders.

T: 020 7445 8150

Coram Islington Parenting Support Service

Coram provides parenting support for parents and carers in Islington. Phone the free Parenting Support Line (below) for support and information about other local services. The support service also offers drop-in sessions, parenting groups, one-to-one support and parenting courses.

T: 0808 168 5717

E: islington-info@coram.org.uk

W: www.coram.org.uk

Islington Family Information Service

If you are looking for childcare, parenting and family support, things to do with your children, or help to get back into work, the Islington Family Information Service will point you in the right direction. The service is completely free.

Call our team of friendly advisers on **020 7527 5959**, visit www.islington.gov.uk/fs or email fs@islington.gov.uk

For information about parenting courses, please contact the Family Information Services – details on page 26.

Disability Action in Islington (DAII)

DAII offers services for disabled parents and carers and parents of disabled children and young people. There are drop-in sessions at the Upper Street offices and elsewhere. You can also get practical help, information, advice and signposting on issues relating to disability.

T: 020 7354 8925

or 020 7226 0137

(Disability Information Line from 10am–1pm)

Family Action Islington Children's Support Service

This service supports families that are worried about their child aged five to 13, with a focus on managing behaviour issues and improving relationships within the family, building self esteem, and helping families access other agencies where appropriate. They offer flexible home-based support from family support workers, run parenting courses and provide a counselling service for parents.

T: 020 7272 6933

E: islington@family-action.org.uk

Islington Families

Islington Families offers support for families with children of all ages living in Islington or temporarily housed outside the borough, who might be at risk of becoming homeless. This includes support with housing and minimising the risk of homelessness, accessing benefits, education and training. They also give help with problems such as mental health, drugs, alcohol and domestic violence.

T: 0845 600 1055

Parentline Plus

Are you feeling stressed and need to talk to someone? You can ring the Parentline Plus free, national 24-hour helpline or visit their website for information.

T: 0808 800 2222

W: www.parentlineplus.org.uk

If you would like this document in large print or Braille, audiotape or in another language, please contact 020 7527 2000.

Bengali

যদি আপনি এই তথ্যগুলো আপনার নিজ ভাষায় পেতে চান, তাহলে দয়া করে 020 7527 2000 নম্বরে যোগাযোগ করুন।

Chinese (Traditional)

如果你想要這資料的中文本, 請致電 020 7527 2000 聯繫。

Somali

Haddii aad jeclaan lahayd macluumaadkan oo ku qoran luqadaada fadlan la xidhiidh 020 7527 2000

Turkish

Buradaki bilgilerin Türkçesini istiyorsanız, lütfen 020 7527 2000 numaraya telefon edin.

Contact Islington

222 Upper Street, London N1 1XR

E contact@islington.gov.uk **T** 020 7527 2000 **F** 020 7527 5001

Minicom 020 7527 1900 **W** www.islington.gov.uk

