

Paper 4. Key Issues for Disabled People in Islington

Box 1: Profile of disabled people in Islington

- It is estimated that there are 31,000 people in Islington who identify themselves as having an impairment or disability. This is around 17% of the population.
- There are at least 299 organisations in Islington providing support to disabled people across all impairment groups.
- 49% of disabled people of working age are not economically active in Islington
- Over 2,000 children in Islington have Special Educational Needs (although not all of these children will be disabled).
- Disabled graduates in London are one and a half times more likely to be unemployed than non-disabled graduates.
- Four hundred 16-18 year olds are not in education, employment or training (NEET) but disabled young people are nearly three times as likely to be NEET.
- The incidence of disability increases with age. Around one in 20 children are disabled, compared to around one in seven working age adults and almost half of people over state pension age.
- Over 80% of council buildings are accessible for disabled people.

Introduction

1. This paper provides an overview of the key fairness and equality issues for disabled residents and their families living in Islington. For these purposes the paper defines disability as:
“A person has a disability for the purposes of the Act if he or she has a physical or mental impairment and the impairment has a substantial and long term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day to day activities.” (Sec 6 [1] Equality Act, 2010)
2. This includes people who are blind or visually impaired; deaf or hearing impaired; people with learning difficulties; people with mental health issues; people who are physically impaired; and people with hidden impairments including progressive conditions such as HIV, Multiple Sclerosis or Cancer. Of course the needs and opportunities for disabled people will vary considerably. Together with other sources of evidence, this paper is intended to assist the Islington Fairness Commission in their deliberations and inquiry into how disadvantage and inequality for older people can be reduced.

3. Whilst this paper focuses on the specific disadvantages that individuals may experience as a result of their disability, it is important to note and acknowledge that disabled people have multiple identities. Individuals define themselves, and are defined, by a range of characteristics and circumstances. An individual can be discriminated against for more than one reason and their precise experience of inequality will be determined by the full range of their identity, situation and experiences. Disabled people have the same needs and aspirations as non-disabled residents, however there are often barriers in place which prevent them from achieving these things. The 'social model' of disability states that people with impairments are disabled by physical and social barriers, rather than by their particular impairment or health condition. This is a key concept for service providers and employers to understand to enable them to take the necessary actions to dismantle the barriers that exclude and limit opportunities for disabled people.
4. As a group, disabled residents in Islington have made significant progress over the last ten years and there are some significant personal achievements. For example, the employment rate and educational achievement for disabled people have both risen steadily. Sadly, however, for considerable numbers of residents deep inequality still persists. The costs of such inequality are borne not only by the individuals concerned, but very often by their families and the whole of society, in terms of the costs associated with community cohesion, avoidable reliance on benefits or poor health.
5. This paper identifies two main ways in which to approach fairness and equality for disabled people and their families:
 - There are some needs and experiences that are specific to disabled residents which will not necessarily apply more generally to non-disabled residents in the borough. These include services provided by Islington to support disabled residents including, for instance, specialist support services or accessible transport but also relates to the differing experiences of disabled residents. Disabled residents face problems such as poor physical access to businesses that prevent them fully enjoying social venues; they face crimes such as Blue Badge theft and harassment because of their disability or impairment that are alien to non-disabled residents and impact on their ability to live their lives with dignity. From this perspective, fairness is determined by the extent to which disabled people are enabled to live fulfilling lives and play an active role within the community, irrespective of their disability or impairment.
 - There are also certain characteristics of disabled people themselves, which will directly link to their outcomes. For example, lack of education, qualifications, or the effects of long term impairments such as mental health or Multiple Sclerosis can have a direct impact on people's ability to work. This in turn can correlate to deprivation and inequality. From this perspective, fairness is determined by the extent to which disabled people and their families are able to achieve outcomes they want to achieve, despite their particular circumstances.
6. The two approaches are not mutually exclusive and in reality many disabled people face multiple barriers to fairness and equality at the same time. More importantly, the causes and effects of fairness and inequality are intertwined and reinforce each other. For instance, the feeling of loneliness and isolation experienced by many disabled people or parents/ carers of disabled children can be exacerbated where an individual is unable to

physically leave their home without support; much less the lack of accessibility of many facilities such as libraries, museums or café's. Difficulty in gaining access to suitable venues further intensifies the experience of loneliness and isolation.

7. The rest of this paper provides a picture of some of the key issues for disabled people in Islington and sets out how service providers and others are seeking to tackle fairness and equality for disabled residents. The paper also includes some key questions for the Commission to consider in shaping possible solutions and further analysis.

Children and Education

8. It is important that disabled children, like non-disabled children, have freedom to play, interact with their peers and receive love and guidance from adult carers. There are often barriers to meeting the needs of disabled children and young people. For example, many disabled children face higher levels of supervision from parents, teachers and carers which can impact on their ability to meet other young people, form friendships and gain from positive social interaction.
9. Issues such as special school transport, special schools and regular hospital appointments, often means disabled children are defined by their disability rather than seen as individuals. A report undertaken by Leeds University, 'Life as a Disabled Child' found that the disabled children strongly felt that their voices were hidden and that often choices were made 'for them' by adults and their views were not given sufficient weight. Work in Islington by organisations such as Centre 404 who provide specific social events and outings for young disabled children; adolescents and siblings offer the opportunity to learn new skills, meet new people and get out of the house. The groups are run on a weekly basis and allow members to do the things most children take for granted like meeting other children, playing outdoors, going to see a film, making art and expressing themselves.
10. There has been some very good progress in Islington's special schools that has helped to improve outcomes for disabled students with the 'attainment gap' between pupils with Special Educational Needs and their non-disabled peers at the level of achieving 5 'good' A-C grades at GCSE level, at 38.3% which is lower than the rest of London (46.5%) and England (46.5%). This equates to 8.9% of children with a special education need achieving 5 'good' GCSE's.
11. Four hundred 16-18 year olds are not in education, employment or training (NEET) but disabled young people are nearly three times as likely to be NEET and they are then more likely to become long term workless and continue to live on or below the poverty line. For a young person with a disability this can be even more isolating than for a non-disabled person as adaptations and assistance which could make life easier, are often financially out of reach.
12. Work with disabled young people by specialist teams in Islington such as the 14 – 19 team and the Islington Council Transitions team seek to tackle this inequality by offering young disabled people specific support for work advice and work opportunities. Likewise, the Connexions service provides a specific assessment for the 7% of young

people between the ages of 13 – 25 who have a learning difficulty that enables their transition into further education or training.

Work and Benefits

13. Dedicated programs such as Access to Work have helped to reduce the employment gap between disabled and non-disabled people, however there are still significant gaps in outcome between disabled and non-disabled people. Under half of all disabled people are in paid employment. Falling to only one-fifth of people with mental health conditions and people with learning disabilities. Islington benefits from some excellent third sector provision which seeks to help disabled residents into employment by providing experience in a working environment and support to help disabled residents stay in work. Examples such as the Siren project run by the Elfrida Rathbone Society in Islington, offers innovative options such as DJ training. The Wild Bunch, the DJ's from Siren are well known and respected and run regular club nights across London. Their work inspires other disabled people who want a career in the Arts and through their gigs challenge any pre-conceptions non disabled clubbers may have about the talents of young people with learning impairments. There are also projects such as the Hillside Clubhouse catering project; this offers Clubhouse members, all of whom have mental health needs, paid work in an accredited catering service. This experience builds confidence, allows members to gain workplace experience and helps those who feel ready to look to move into other employment.
14. Unfortunately, there is no accurate data regarding employment rates for disabled people in the borough, however approximately 9% of the borough's working age residents are on incapacity benefit, considerably higher than the average for London (6.2%) and nationally (7.2%).
15. However, there may be a number of factors which contribute to the relatively low level of disabled people in employment, including:
 - 40% of disabled adults have no formal qualifications and of all people nationally without formal skills, over one-third are disabled.
 - The employment-rate gap between disabled and non-disabled people has decreased from around 36 per cent in 2002 to around 29 per cent in 2010. However, disabled people are far less likely to be in employment. Although there have been significant improvements in the employment rates of disabled people in the last decade, the employment rates of disabled people are around 48 per cent, compared with around 78 per cent of non-disabled people (Labour Force Survey, Quarter 2, 2010)
 - 11 per cent of working age disabled people hold degree-level qualifications compared to 22 per cent of working age non-disabled people
 - Some disabled residents may be concerned about how they are perceived by employers. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) have found that prejudice against people with mental health conditions is endemic among employers. A MIND survey found that 58% of respondents had had to leave a job because of a lack of mental health support. There is also clear evidence that people with mental health conditions are severely discriminated against when applying for work. In the same MIND survey 1 in 4 respondents had had a job offer withdrawn after they disclosed a mental health problem.

16. There are lots of things which employers can do as part of their fair practice to encourage employment for disabled people. For example, as an employer, Islington Council has made a commitment to increase the number of disabled people working for the Council. There are currently just over 4% of staff who formally identify as being disabled; compared to 9% of staff who declared as disabled in an anonymous staff survey. A specific Disabled Staff Action Plan has been put together with the aim of improving recruitment and retention rates for disabled staff. Islington Council is also using its position as a contractor with local service providers to promote equality for disabled staff and service users: all new potential contractors with Islington Council are asked to sign the Equality and Cohesion Charter which restates a commitment to equal opportunities for customers and staff in contracting.
17. The relatively low employment rate in Islington is significant. Worklessness is overwhelmingly associated with poverty in Islington. The Islington Fairness Commission has previously identified the urgency of addressing poverty amongst the 11,000 parents and 18,000 children that officially fall below the poverty line in Islington. Based on national figures it is estimated that approximately a quarter of these children live in families with at least one disabled parent. In addition to material deprivation, the constant juggling act to pay for food, bills, heating and housing can create significant worry and anxiety. According to the Households Below Average Income (HBAI) figures 23% of individuals in families with at least one disabled member live in relative income poverty, on a Before Housing Costs basis, compared to 16% of individuals in families with no disabled member.
18. The 2010 Budget and Spending Review aims to achieve £18billion savings from the welfare bill through 37 different cuts in benefit entitlements. Additional savings are anticipated from the re-assessment of all claimants of the main sickness benefits; the implementation of the Work programme and introduction of a Universal Credit (which will replace all means tested benefits for people of working age). Specifically this will impact over 12,000 people in Islington who are claiming long term sickness benefits - 7560 of them (62%) for five years or more and a high proportion of the claims are on the basis of poor mental health.

Services for disabled people

19. Local authorities have statutory duties under both Children's and Adults legislation to provide services to those who meet eligibility criteria. In terms of fairness and equality this means ensuring that services are in place to address specific needs of disabled people, so that they are not disadvantaged simply by reason of their disability. For example, the council has a duty to provide services to disabled adults to enable them to live independently. Statutory authorities also need to ensure that their core mainstream services are available to disabled residents in the same way they are for other residents. An example of this could be tailoring the accessibility of parks or other public services such as installing reading software for blind or visually impaired people in libraries.
20. Services for disabled people also need to be designed so that they take account of the needs of disabled people who may have particular barriers to accessing a service whether these occur as a result of their disability (for instance, deaf or visually impaired

people) or the specific characteristics of some disabled people (for instance, disabled people or carers who do not speak English).

21. Islington Council spends approximately £40m annually across adults and children's services on delivering services to disabled adults and children and their families. This excludes the cost spent on special education services. In addition, over £1.2m has been spent on improving the accessibility of council buildings.
22. Engagement with service providers is a key concern and in addition to the ongoing programme of consultations on specific services, the Council and its partners have set up a variety of forums to engage with disabled people and to ensure that services are designed to be more responsive to disabled people's needs. The Disability Equality Performance Group (DEPG) was established to scrutinise the council's performance on disability equality. Additionally the Disability Reference Group (DRG) provides a user perspective and representatives of the DRG also sit on the DEPG meetings. In addition, disabled people (groups and individuals) are involved / represented in a wide range of forums and boards across the council including, the mobility forum (transport); LINK (scrutiny of health services); social services forums; Choice and Control Programme Board; disabled children's forums; carer's forums and Citizen's Panel to name a few.

Health and Social Care

23. A vital area of provision for disabled people in Islington is the work of the voluntary sector. Islington is fortunate to be able to have a great range and quality of services in the voluntary sector, a recent survey by Voluntary Action in Islington found there were 299 third sector providers who range from large national organisations such as RNIB and Sense to small local groups, such as the Stuart Low Trust and Disability Action in Islington delivering specialist support to residents.
24. The Islington Borough profile identifies disabled people experience significant health inequalities and reduced health outcomes with mortality rates amongst some groups five to ten years below that of non-disabled residents. Although the Borough Profile only provides a partial picture, it indicates that people with mental health conditions and learning difficulties experience the worst health outcomes
25. Islington provides a range of services to improve and increase access to leisure services for disabled residents. These range from improving leisure centres by installing pool hoists; reduced rates for disabled swimmers; one to one advice and support for residents with restricted mobility. Additionally, day centres such as Outlook have a dedicated gym for disabled residents which provide a range of specialist equipment in a supportive environment.
26. The Stuart Low Trust has been recognised by the London Health Commission for the work they do taking groups of adults with mental health issues on outings across London. Work such as this also combats issues such as social isolation and loneliness by building confidence and knowledge among the disabled residents who take up these services.

27. In terms of specialist services, 'Transforming Social Care' recognises the importance of providing service users with greater independence and flexibility. The 'Choice and Control' programme provides service users and carers with a lot more choice about their support and provides them with control over how their allocation of funding is spent to help them remain active and independent. Over 25% of service users are receiving personal budgets to allow them to do this. Services are continuously developing to ensure that disabled people have the information and support they need to exercise their choices effectively.
28. There is on-going work to encourage service users to take up personal budgets and users can receive help throughout the process if they need it. This policy, once fully implemented has the potential to ensure each service user will have a choice as to how and where they can spend their money.
29. This leads to ensuring the accessibility of information that enables disabled residents to have the information they need about public services, in a way which they can access and understand. The Accessible Information guidance that the council has developed aims to provide residents with the information they require, in formats that are accessible without the individual needing to ask for the information. This is particularly important given that only around half of all households with a disabled member have access to the internet, compared to two thirds of households with no disabled members.
30. It is also worth noting that many disabled people rely entirely or partially on unpaid help from carers, in their family or friends. Carers, not the state, provide the majority of health and social care support in the UK. In Islington there are at least 13,500 carers (according to 2001 Census) and 52% are not in paid employment meaning they are reliant on benefits. Additionally, approximately 15% of carers are themselves in poor health and 33% are caring for more than 20 hours a week. This in turn further correlates to deprivation and inequality for disabled people and their families.

Housing

31. Approximately one third of council tenants have declared as having some sort of disability or impairment, in part this is because of the cost of buying or renting properties in the borough and also because of practical issues such as ensuring sufficient space for carers and ensuring room for equipment and adaptations. Strict rental agreements which prohibit changes to properties and high deposits further alienate and exclude disabled residents from the private rental market. All of these factors combine to ensure that many disabled people in Islington have a strong reliance upon social housing for affordable and accessible accommodation.
32. Housing needs are closely linked with an individual's ability to remain living independently. Supported housing can include anything from an intercom on the front door to having a personal assistant, depending on the needs of the individual to live independently. Islington's Housing department have developed a Housing Options toolkit to assist both staff and disabled people or parents of disabled children to consider their options, however, many still feel that the process of bidding for properties is quite stressful. This is an example of where the council as a service provider needs to ensure

that mainstream services are accessible and available to enable disabled people to make choices and decisions to be as independent as possible.

33. Whilst it is widely recognised that housing can be a major issue for people who need to access health and social care services, the importance of suitable housing for carers however, is less well understood. A report into the needs of carers and housing (Princess Royal Trust for Carers) identified a number of issues facing carers including:
- a. Lettings policies taking carers into account (for instance, separate room; prioritising people who want to support someone at home; overcrowding);
 - b. Inheritance issues for carers in rented housing (i.e. succession to tenancies); and
 - c. Equipment, adaptations, repairs and improvements (including finding out and paying for equipment and adaptations).

Community Safety and Anti social behaviour

34. Recent research published by the Equality and Human Right Commission found that disabled people are at greater risk of targeted violence and hostility, often with a devastating effect on their freedom to lead their life. A report undertaken by Leonard Cheshire Disability identified that 9% of disabled people felt that they had been the victim of hate crime that was motivated by their disability. An additional issue faced by victims of disability hate crime compared to other types of hate crime is the clear perception that disability hate crime is not treated with the same seriousness by police as the other forms of crime. This is reinforced by the Metropolitan Police monthly statistics, which monitor racist, religious and homophobic hate crime levels but not disability hate crime. Additionally the official 'Crimestoppers' website when describing hate crime does not even offer disability as a reason.
35. In Islington the 2008 Place Survey indicated that 63% of disabled people felt less safe when out and about in their local area than the population as a whole (52%), but a similar survey in 2009 did not show any significant difference in the perceptions of safety between the two groups – 52% of disabled people compared to 51% of non-disabled people. It is unclear if this is directly attributable to increased community safety measures taken by Islington Police and Islington Council. Key activities to address disability include increasing the visibility of Police Community Support Officers and the recent introduction of an allocated a deaf liaison officer and a dedicated text phone number for deaf people to report non-emergency incidents. The council also runs "Linkline" service which provides community alarm services to over 1000 people including many disabled people.
36. A disproportionate number of people in prison have learning disabilities and/or mental health conditions, and a succession of reports have found that learning disabled prisoners have poor access to rehabilitation and support. Despite the huge prevalence of learning disabilities amongst those held in custody, there is no routine screening or assessment of people in prison to identify their needs properly. People with learning disabilities are unlikely to benefit, and may be excluded, from programmes designed to stop re-offending. Many are victimised and bullied in prison. The Prison Reform Trust have launched 'No One Knows', a UK-wide programme of work to investigate and improve the treatment of people with learning disabilities and difficulties in the criminal justice system.

"Being in prison is frightening. People shout a lot. It's noisy. You don't know what's

happening to you. They do things to you and take over. People who work in prison need to know how to support people with learning difficulties and disabilities.”

37. Disabled people are more likely to be victims of crime than non-disabled people and are also more likely to have their lives influenced by a fear of crime. Work programmes which reduce the risk of re-offending have a double impact of helping to turn round the life of the offender as well reducing the impact of crime on disabled residents. Leonard Cheshire work with young disabled ex-offenders being released from prisons across London, this work is aimed at preventing re-offending and is vital if disabled ex-offenders are to be diverted from committing further offences.

Key issues for the Islington Fairness Commission

38. The following questions may help the Commission in its deliberations about how to tackle inequality and disadvantage for disabled people in Islington and help them to shape possible solutions and further analysis:
- What key actions could mainstream services take, despite reduced resources, to better meet the needs of disabled residents? How can disabled people be better supported to live fulfilling lives and play an active role in the community irrespective of their disability?
 - What steps can be taken in Islington to help disabled residents to find and retain well paid work?
 - The Commission may wish to consider whether there are ways in which the rental housing market could be opened up to disabled residents to increase the opportunities for housing in the Borough.
 - How can services be re-designed to ensure that support is provided to children and families at a level that meets their needs?
 - The Commission may wish to instigate a pilot in Islington whereby the Metropolitan Police record disability hate crime as a discreet category.