

The Islington Fairness Commission

DRAFT

Final Report



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Foreword

Why inequality matters

In a period when the government is having to judge how far it can reduce national debt without choking off economic growth, it might be thought that the challenge of creating a fairer society is a luxury we can ill afford. But as public services are cut, fairness matters more than ever. The bigger the gap between rich and poor, the more violence, ill health, drug abuse and signs of social breakdown we have to deal with. This means that need for public services – for police, health care, drug rehabilitation, prisons and social services – is powerfully affected by how fair or unfair our society is. Community life is weaker in societies with bigger income differences. Over and over again, the statistics testify to the truth of the old intuition that inequality is indeed divisive and the enemy of social cohesion. Even the potential for creating a Big Society, in which voluntary services and local communities shoulder more of the burden, is dramatically reduced when the gap between rich and poor grows wider.

Income differences between rich and poor widened dramatically during the 1980s and subsequent governments have failed to undo the damage. As a result, the gap between the richest 20 per cent and the poorest 20 per cent of the British population is now twice as big as in the more equal of the developed market democracies. Britain's large income differences inevitably put a special strain on almost all local services simply because the level of inequality is one of the most powerful drivers of the level of health problems and social issues a society has to cope with. Amongst western European countries, Britain has among the highest rates of mental illness, drug abuse, teenage birth rates, imprisonment and child obesity, and among the lowest levels of child wellbeing and social mobility.

In a recent report for the London Sustainable Development Commission it was estimated (on the basis of international comparisons) that if the scale of income differences between rich and poor in Britain were reduced to what it is in more equal countries like Japan, Norway, Sweden and Finland, the murder rate would fall dramatically, teenage birth rates and rates of mental illness might fall to a fraction of what they are now, life expectancy and children's school performance would improve and drug abuse would go down.

It is often assumed that many health and social problems become more frequent lower down the social ladder because of a tendency for the most vulnerable to lose out and move down, while the most resilient move up. But however much people with health or social problems suffer less good chances of moving up the social ladder, such processes would do nothing to explain why these problems are anything from twice as common to ten times as common in more unequal societies.

Another commonly held view is that these problems are more common among the least well off because they are somehow caused directly by poorer physical circumstances – as if directly, by the bricks and mortar of less good housing. But although economic growth continues to increase material living standards, it no longer has much impact on the prevalence of these problems in the rich countries.

Though unrelated to levels of average income in rich countries, the evidence shows that the frequency of social and health problems (such as violence, poor health, teenage births, child wellbeing and mental illness) increases with the size of the income gaps in these societies. There is now a growing scientific understanding of the links with inequality – of the ways in which status competition, or feeling devalued, disrespected, insecure and worried about how you are seen and judged by others, can affect human health and behaviour. Nor is this a problem simply of income levels among the least well off. Because it is the size of the income

gap that matters, runaway incomes at the top are just as damaging. Indeed, the main reason why income differences have widened over the last generation is the more rapid growth of income at the top than in the rest of society.

Improving the quality of life in Islington

The Islington Fairness Commission was set up to improve the quality of life in the borough by making it a fairer place for all who live and work in it. Islington is marked by some of the starkest contrasts in wealth and poverty in the country.

In modern societies almost everyone is against distinctions of social class and says that they would prefer to live in a classless society, but large differences in income and wealth increase the social distances between people and add to distinctions of class and status. To want to create a classless society without reducing income differences is like wanting to get slim without reducing the calories. Material inequalities inevitably amplify the lifestyle distinctions which are used to express status, exclusivity, and the feelings of superiority and inferiority which go with them.

The social distinctions which imprint themselves on us all – from earliest life onwards – are however not simply the result of *local* contrasts in incomes and wealth. They also reflect the scale of class distinctions in each society's *national* social pyramid, as they are underpinned by larger or smaller material differences which lead, in turn, to larger or smaller social distances. Although local inequalities also matter, what most affects the wellbeing of the people of Islington is where each person comes – higher or lower – in the national social hierarchy, and whether the social pyramid is steeper and more unequal or flatter and more equal. For example, the high levels of ill health found in deprived neighbourhoods are caused less by the inequality within them than by the fact that the whole neighbourhood is deprived in relation to the wider society.

The failure to reverse the widening of income differences which took place in the 1980s has left Britain a much more unequal society than it had been at any time in the preceding generation. As well as the costs, in terms of the burden of health and social problems which local services have had to cope with, widening income differences have resulted in a weakening of community life, an increase in status competition and consumerism, and an increase in some of the tougher and more antisocial aspects of life in the public sphere.

If we are to improve the quality of life in Islington it will require the participation of everyone. Rather than being something the Council can do on its own, it will take the combined efforts of the public, private and voluntary sectors, as well as of the community at large. One of the most important contributions which Islington Council can make is to coordinate this effort across the different sectors and inspire us all with the need to reduce the socioeconomic divisions in the borough to make Islington a friendlier and more cohesive place to live.

Many of the ways people might think a Council could reduce income differences are not within its power. Councils cannot shift more of the burden of Council Tax from the poor to the rich: the ratio of one tax band to another is fixed by law. The Council's influence among local employers is largely a matter of persuasion. It cannot order companies to pay the London Living Wage. Even the ways in which public bodies can use their choice of suppliers to influence pay and employment practice are severely limited. However, the Council should pay its own staff at least the London Living Wage and encourage other local employers in all sectors to do likewise.

The Hutton Review of Fair Pay in the public sector recommended that public bodies should be required to publish the ratio of earnings of the chief executive to the median earnings of all its employees. It also recommended that listed companies, and particularly major suppliers to the public sector and organisations that play a major role in delivering public services, should do likewise. In most of the FTSE 100 companies these ratios are several hundred to one. Compared to that, the public sector is very much more egalitarian. In the military and most of the rest of the public sector, including the civil service and the NHS, these ratios are rarely as much as eight to one and are usually below seven to one.

Rather than being interested simply in the ratio of top to middle incomes in each organisation, a focus on inequality and fairness suggests that we should look at the bigger overall difference between the lowest and highest paid full-time staff. Among all direct employees of Islington Council, from the Chief Executive downwards, this ratio ought not to exceed 1:12. The Greater London Authority has committed itself to an overall ratio of 1:20 with the stated intention of progressing towards a ratio of 1:10.

This report details other ways in which Islington Council and its partners will try to reduce income differences and inequality such as in employment opportunities, housing and children's educational opportunities and life chances. It also outlines some of the principles which will guide any further reductions it is obliged to make to its own services in the years ahead as a result of reductions in its grants from the government. But if Britain is ever to halve its income differences to reach the level found in the more equal of the developed market democracies, what Islington can do should be regarded only as the first steps in a campaign which will have to involve the whole country and be sustained for ten or twenty years.

Fairness and the cuts

The path which has led from the need to rescue banks from the financial consequences of decisions made by their senior staff, to massive increases in government debt, and finally to cutting services on which many of the least well-off depend, is not a path leading to fairness. The public discussion of whether or not the cuts are fair has focused on whether they cause equal pain to the rich and poor, not on whether it is fair to cut services to pay for the mistakes of the rich. Indeed, to cut services to many of the most needy, while some bankers and others continue to receive bonuses *each year* of amounts equal to the combined total life-time earnings of up to four full-time workers on average earnings, clearly has nothing to do with fairness.

An alternative to making such large cuts would have been to pay off more of the deficit by raising top tax rates further and by preventing tax avoidance. In the later 1970s, top income tax rates stood at 83 per cent. Although the most important contribution to the widening income gap since then has been that incomes at the top have run away from the rest of us, the marginal top tax rate now stands at only 50 per cent – not of course paid on total income but only on that part of income over £150,000. But whatever one's view of the fairness or otherwise of the policies Government has adopted to reduce the deficit, Islington Council and its partners have little choice but to reduce their expenditure. The Council's grant from central government, which covers much the larger part of local government expenditure, has been cut drastically and local authorities can only choose where, not whether, to reduce their expenditure. Islington Council and its partners can only aim to minimise the pain that cuts will inevitably cause many Islington residents.

Public meetings

The Islington Fairness Commission has held a series of seven public meetings throughout the borough. The large number of the public who attended them – over 500 people, many coming

to more than one – shows that there is a growing desire for change and for a fairer society. This augurs well for efforts to build an enduring social movement – involving public, private and voluntary sectors as well as society at large – dedicated to this end. Following Islington's example, a number of other local authorities around the country, including Liverpool (the most deprived local authority area in England) and Nottingham, have also set up Fairness Commissions showing their commitment to creating a fairer, more equal and less divided society. Examples such as these can play an important part in inspiring others in both the public and private sectors. But much will depend on whether the higher pay ratios in the private sector can be reduced to something nearer those found in the public sector.

One of the most striking features of the public meetings which The Islington Fairness Commission held was the strength of the representations from many disadvantaged sections of the population. The Commission heard appeals for better services from the physically disabled, from young people in care, from the deaf, from the elderly, from the charitable sector, from people in social housing and from people speaking up on behalf of single parents, refugees and asylum seekers and other disadvantaged groups. Each group rightly saw aspects of its situation as unfair and regarded it as essential to campaign for better services. As the primary focus of the Fairness Commission's work is the need to reduce income differences between rich and poor, its remit necessarily includes disadvantaged groups who usually suffer a double burden: not only their personal disability, disadvantage or special difficulty, but also the further challenge of having to live on low incomes. And, of course, on top of that additional difficulty, low incomes also increase the stigmatisation and social exclusion of those already disadvantaged.

The Islington Fairness Commission encourages employers and people dealing with claimants throughout the borough to reduce the additional burden of low incomes suffered by disadvantaged groups. If the living standards of the least well-off can be improved relative to the rest of the population, research suggests that this will improve not only the quality of life of the poor, but also the quality of life of the vast majority of the population. A society which cares for its members and avoids huge income differences between them is more cohesive, community life is stronger, and people trust each other more.

The task ahead

A more cohesive society will also benefit people with particular disabilities and disadvantages in other ways. The government's Big Society project is intended to create a more caring society in which neighbours know each other better and can help each other out, and in which the community is able to take better care of those with special needs. That is a laudable aim. However, people's isolation and reliance on public services – particularly among those with special needs – has inevitably increased as social cohesion and community life have weakened under the impact of widening income differences over the last generation. If we really want to build the Big Society we must do so on the bedrock of smaller income differences between rich and poor. Time and again research has shown that inequality is one of the most powerful influences on the quality of the social fabric.

Cuts in public expenditure would have been easier to absorb if they had come after a period of falling, rather than rising, inequality. But with unprecedented levels of inequality, Britain is a more antisocial society: community life has weakened, levels of trust have declined, and we have become less willing to take care of each other.

Against this backdrop, and facing an unprecedented scale of cuts in central-to-local government grant, the work of The Fairness Commission has been particularly difficult. But its importance should not be underestimated. When responsibility for public health is moved from

the NHS to local authorities, local authorities will become responsible for reducing the 5-10 year differences in life expectancy found between rich and poor neighbourhoods in many of our cities. Such huge differences in life chances are perhaps the most important human rights abuse in rich societies.

Success requires much more than the implementation of the recommendations made in this report. Achieving a fairer, more equal and more cohesive society will need a sustained campaign of public education and policy development perhaps lasting for several decades. But Islington can take a lead in addressing issues of inequality, both from the bottom up and – where top pay or pay differentials are excessive – from the top down.

Rather than being simply a matter of politics and political differences, building a fairer society is about the ethical basis of a better quality of life for all. Everyone would prefer to live in a friendlier, more cohesive and caring society, with less violence, stronger community life, fewer drug problems and higher standards of child wellbeing. Over the last generation modern societies have made huge progress in overcoming racism, homophobia and discrimination against women. The campaign against excessive inequalities in income is the next major task in front of us. What is at stake is nothing less than the emancipation of a very large part of the population from the slur of disrespect and inferiority. Islington is leading the way.

Professor (Emeritus) Richard Wilkinson
Co-author of *The Spirit Level*
Chair of The Islington Fairness Commission

Introduction

The Islington Fairness Commission was set up in July 2010 to spend a year exploring how to make Islington a fairer place for everyone who lives and works in the borough. Its Interim Report was published in February 2011, providing an update on the Commission's progress and a summary of its findings so far. This Final Report of the Commission is published in June 2011 and contains the Commission's conclusions and 20 concrete recommendations for how to make Islington a fairer place.

Process

The details of the Commission process are available in the twelve **Appendices** at the back of this report. The Terms of Reference agreed at the Commission's inception are in **Appendix 1**. The Members of the Commission who have driven its work are listed in **Appendix 2**, with the Observers who helped steer it in **Appendix 3** and the Officers who have worked extremely hard behind the scenes to make it happen in **Appendix 4**. The wide-ranging methodology the Commission employed in its research is outlined in **Appendix 5**. Those who testified as witnesses before the Commission are listed in **Appendix 6** and those who contributed written submissions to the Commission in **Appendix 7**. The financial cost of the Commission is broken down in **Appendix 8**. The coverage the Commission received in online, print and broadcast media is listed in **Appendix 9**. A bibliography of reading materials relevant to the Commission's work is provided in **Appendix 10**. For reference, a copy of the Interim Report of the Commission is included in **Appendix 11**. Finally, the twenty recommendations made in this, the Commission's Final Report, are collated in **Appendix 12**. Most of this material is also available at the Commission's dedicated website: www.islington.gov.uk/fairness

The case for change

The argument advanced in *The Spirit Level*, the global bestseller co-authored by Professor Richard Wilkinson who chairs The Islington Fairness Commission, is both inspirational and compelling: everyone benefits from a fairer society in which the gap between the haves and have-nots is narrowed. It is a message that, here in Islington, speaks not just to the Council, which has an important civic leadership role to play, but to the whole community, including the borough's diverse charities, businesses, public service providers and residents, from young professionals, to those struggling with poverty, to our many multi-millionaires. Despite the borough's deprivation – both relative and absolute – we have an impressive array of assets to call upon in our community and a determination on the part of all the organisations represented on this Commission to bring about a fairer Islington. It is the intention of this report to help us visualise that goal, and realise it.

Context

Strong as the case for change is, the context in which Islington finds itself is not one that will make delivering that change easy. Like other local authorities, Islington is now experiencing the most severe Government cuts since the Second World War. The borough is the hardest hit in London, in percentage terms. Having been forced to make £7m of in-year cuts in 2010/11, the London Borough of Islington then had to make £52m of savings in its 2011/12 budget. By 2014/15, there will be £335m less spent per year on public services in the borough. These reductions in the public sector are being compounded by higher living costs, a less secure labour market characterised by wage freezes, and a reduction in welfare and benefits payments being made to residents. It is in this unforgiving context, imposed on the borough by central government, that the Commission makes its recommendations to close the gap between Islington's rich and poor.

Progress so far

Despite this difficult context, and the limitations of what can be done in it, this is no time for a counsel of despair, and the Commission notes that significant steps have been taken, as it has conducted its business over the past year, towards a fairer Islington. Examples of these include:

- In September 2010, Islington Council announced that 150 cleaning staff will be offered a contract with the Council that guarantees they would be paid the London Living Wage, as a minimum, because of the Council's decision to bring the cleaning service in-house rather than continue with an out-sourced cleaning contract. This was achieved without additional expense to Islington taxpayers.
- At the Commission meeting in November 2010, more than 80 people signed up through Islington Giving to volunteer with local community groups.
- In January 2011 it was confirmed that the salary of the incoming Chief Executive of Islington Council would be £160,000, which is £50,000 less than that of the outgoing Chief Executive, narrowing the pay differential in one of the borough's bigger employers.
- In April 2011, a new Citizens Advice Bureau was opened in the borough.
- An Islington Fairness Test was applied in drawing up the Council's budget for 2011/12 to ensure that spending in areas critical to a fairer Islington was actively prioritised and protected wherever possible.

Nor has recent progress been confined to Islington. The Islington Fairness Commission has set a trend nationally. At least two other Fairness Commissions have now been established, drawing on the Islington model, in Liverpool and Nottingham.

The Islington Fairness Framework

The Islington Fairness Framework (below) has been developed by the Commission to provide a robust theoretical underpinning for its work:

The Islington Fairness Framework

Purpose

The purpose of The Islington Fairness Commission is to make Islington a fairer place to live and work. All the organisations represented on the Commission are committed to this mission.

Definition

To make Islington fairer means reducing poverty and inequality in the areas that matter most to Islington people's life chances.

Timeframe

The Commission is focused primarily on inspiring change that is deliverable in the period 2010-2014, although it is also mindful of the longer term beyond that.

Strategy

A strategic approach to this task, including the whole community, must operate at three levels:

Fair Policy – ensuring fairness in the priorities we set and the policies we pursue.

Fair Practice – ensuring fairness in the way we turn these priorities and policies into practice, including the ways we do business and spend money.

Fair People – ensuring fairness in enabling all parts of Islington's community to have a stake and a say in the borough's future, and to play an active and joined-up role in developing it.

Priorities

The priority areas that matter most to Islington people's life chances are:

Income – everyone earning a living income, and less income inequality.

Work – work for everyone who is able to work.

Families – supporting families to give all children a good start in life, particularly through high quality early years provision and high standards in schools.

Community – strong communities, where everyone is respected, valued and able to engage in civic life.

Safety – low levels of crime and antisocial behaviour, and less fear of it.

Housing – a secure, decent, affordable home for everyone, and an end to overcrowding.

Health – everyone enjoying a good quality of physical and mental health.

Equalities

Equalities issues cut across all these priorities. In each of these areas, for example, people from minority ethnic backgrounds, disabled people and women can all fare worse, and tackling this is vital to ensuring fairness.

Analysis and recommendations

Here we present a brief and far from exhaustive account of the most salient aspects of the Commission's analysis of its findings in each of the priority areas identified in The Islington Fairness Framework. We then make recommendations in each of those fields which, if implemented, we believe would make Islington a fairer place for all. Our recommendations are, where possible, intended to be novel, radical and SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timed).

Income - *everyone earning a living income, and less income inequality*

'It is not absolute but relative poverty that makes the real difference', Islington resident

As *The Spirit Level* demonstrates, societies that are less equal in terms of their income distribution perform less well across almost all indicators of quality of life, ranging from crime levels, to mental health, to educational achievement and life expectancy.

In Islington, the wealthiest 20% of households command an income in excess of £60,000 per annum, while the income of the poorest 20% of households is less than £15,000 each year. More than 8,000 Islington residents have a total annual income, including all benefits, of less than £10,000.

Wages

It is illegal for any employer to pay their employees less than the National Minimum Wage (currently £5.93/hr, rising to £6.08/hr on 1 October 2011). Suspected underpayment can be reported to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs for enforcement. But the Greater London Authority (GLA) has calculated that the London Living Wage (LLW) for a worker in London should be £7.85 an hour, or approximately £14,300 a year. The LLW takes account of the income required by a worker to achieve an adequate level of warmth and shelter, a healthy palatable diet, social integration and avoidance of chronic stress. The Commission notes that Islington Council, NHS Islington and Islington Police are among 15 of the biggest employers in borough which have formally adopted the London Living Wage and pay at least that to all of their (directly employed) staff. However, these employers still represent the exception rather than the rule. The Commission also notes that these and other organisations can make further progress by seeking to ensure that their subcontractors and their supply chains also pay the LLW.

Pay differentials

One way to close this gap is to reduce the pay differentials between staff within organisations in Islington. Currently, the pay differential between the lowest paid and highest paid (directly employed) staff in three of the borough's major public sector employers are as follows:

Islington Council	1:14
NHS Islington	1:9
Islington Police	1:7

With the departure of the Council's current Chief Executive in May 2011 and the arrival of his successor in June 2011 on a salary reduced by £50,000, the Council's pay differential will improve to 1:11. Some of the widest pay differentials, however, are to be found in the private sector, beyond the reach of Freedom of Information. Employers in Islington should seek to narrow, or at least not widen, the pay differential between their lowest paid and highest paid

staff. A sustained principle of making new appointments to senior jobs at below the previous salary level might narrow the gap over time, while minimising conflict over existing contracts.

Debt

The poorest people in Islington are workless and in receipt of benefits. However, the complexity of the benefits system, among other factors, means that too often residents do not take up their full entitlement. There are a number of agencies that help people to do this, such as Islington Council's Income Maximisation and Welfare Rights Team, the Citizen's Advice Bureau, Islington People's Rights, Talk Moneywise, Job Centre Plus, Islington and City Credit Union and Islington Law Centre. Most of these organisations are part of the Islington Debt Coalition. Debt is a significant problem in the borough and one that disproportionately affects the ability of people on low incomes to live on their income and to thrive. A 2010 report by Rocket Science for Islington Council found that over 11,000 people in Islington have unsecured debts of between £5,000 and £15,000 and a further 13,000 people have unsecured debts exceeding £15,000. The Commission commends Islington Debt Coalition's work to support financial literacy and debt-resolution in the borough.

Recommendation 1: Wages

No-one in Islington should do a hard day's work for less than they can live on.

- Employers in Islington should pay all their directly employed staff at least the London Living Wage (currently £7.85/hr) and should review their procurement, contract and best value policies to ensure that, as far as possible within UK and EU law, the London Living Wage is the minimum paid to all their contracted staff as well (for a detailed, step-by-step guide to implementation, see Lewisham Council's document *Becoming a Living Wage Borough – a guide for local authorities*).

Recommendation 2: Pay differentials

Tackling income inequality is crucial to forging a fairer Islington.

- All major employers in the borough should publish their pay differentials to enable them to be scrutinised and challenged where appropriate. In the case of Islington Council, this scrutiny and challenge should mean establishing a formal sub-committee, including officer, member and union representation, to review pay differentials within the organisation.

Recommendation 3: Debt

Personal debt compounds poverty and inequality, and may worsen as people in Islington lose their jobs.

- Islington Council should explore the possibility of passing a by-law to prevent payday loan companies from opening in the borough and work with Islington Police and other enforcement agencies to take action against 'loan sharks'.

Work – work for everyone who is able to work

'I am desperate to find a job and I don't know where to get help. I am scared about my children's future', Islington resident

Employment

Work is integral to income as well as bringing many social benefits, such as improved self esteem, reduced risk of poor health and increased life expectancy. Poverty in Islington is overwhelmingly associated with worklessness. One third of people of working age in Islington do not work. Once they become workless, Islington residents are also more likely to be unemployed for longer than residents of other boroughs. The Commission identified a range of barriers to employment including the lack of availability of local entry-level jobs, work practices which are not sufficiently flexible to fit with caring responsibilities, the affordability of childcare, and a lack of confidence and self esteem among workless people. While Islington as a whole is relatively highly skilled with 47% of residents qualified to degree level, 18,000 residents of working age have no qualifications at all and a further 13,000 have fewer than five GCSE passes. The Commission has considered evidence on workless parents and workless young people and identifies some particular issues of concern.

Islington has the 2nd highest rate of child poverty in England with almost half of all children in the borough living in poverty. Of these children, more than three quarters are from (often intergenerationally) workless, as opposed to low-paid, families. For example, if a single parent of two works 16 hours a week on a minimum wage job, during their first year they would take home £320 a week after housing costs (which is 78% of median income). If that same parent was workless they would take home £198 a week after housing costs (44% of median income). The children of workless parents are unable to benefit from the advantages of their peers, including buying clothes, shoes or being able to have friends around to play. The effects of this poverty also fundamentally alter a child's life chances, with children in poverty on average performing less well in school, earning less in later life and having worse health. Islington is now a Community Budget pilot area, focusing on alleviating child poverty.

Jobs for young people

The national prospects for young people in the job market will remain challenging and there are likely to be higher numbers of workless young people due to greater competition for entry-level jobs, the cost of higher education and the abolition of funding programmes targeted at this group (for example, the Education Maintenance Allowance and the Future Jobs Funds). Considerable research suggests that once a young person becomes unemployed they will find it harder to find employment than people of other age groups and will have reduced prospects over their working life if they do find employment. These young people will also have worse social outcomes than other young people and people in the general population, with higher reported rates of substance abuse, mental health problems and shorter life expectancy. Consistent with the worklessness rate elsewhere in the country, young people in Islington account for 20% of the people currently available for work in the borough. In addition to these figures, there are also four hundred 16-18 year-olds in Islington who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs).

Corporate social responsibility

Communication between Islington's employers and the borough's residents can and should be improved. The Commission therefore welcomes the imminent prospect of a Single Employer Face being established in the borough to coordinate and facilitate the brokering of opportunities for employment, work experience, training, apprenticeships, paid internships, volunteering and corporate social activity. This Single Employer Face will need to make it as easy as possible for

local businesses to take on local people as trainees or employees or to make their own human or financial resources available to areas of need in Islington.

Recommendation 4: Employment

Employment for Islington's residents is the best way to tackle poverty in the borough.

- Employers in Islington should, by means of positive action (such as advertising job opportunities in local media before national media) increase the proportion of local people they employ. In the case of Islington Council this should mean an increase in the proportion of Islington residents in its workforce from 23% to 30% by 2014.

Recommendation 5: Jobs for young people

No young person in Islington should be altogether out of education, employment and training.

- Employers in Islington should do more to support young people who are at risk of falling into the cycle of poverty, particularly by supporting the new initiatives being developed by Islington Business Board, including their 'Adopt a NEET' programme, which will support young people into employment or training.

Recommendation 6: Corporate social responsibility

We need Islington businesses to be on the side of fairness.

- Islington Business Board should develop a plan to promote the following important activities among businesses in the borough:
 - Pay at least the London Living Wage to all staff
 - Have a pay differential of less than 1:20
 - Ensure access for people with disabilities
 - Offer apprenticeships
 - Offer paid internships
 - Have employee representation on remuneration panels
 - Recognise trade unions
 - Offer family-friendly employment practices, eg flexible and part-time working and job-sharing opportunities

Families – *supporting families to give all children a good start in life, particularly through high quality early years provision and high standards in schools*

‘Education and training are the most effective vehicle that the borough has to narrow the gap between rich and poor’, Islington resident

Early years

Children’s life chances are critical to a fair future for Islington. Evidence suggests that the early years of a child’s life are crucial in a child’s development. Family plays a key role here in securing the best possible start. However, socioeconomic factors have a profound influence: a report by the Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit in 2004 noted that in terms of tests of development in early years, by the age of six the low IQ child from the wealthiest family has already overtaken the high IQ child from the poorest background.

Children’s Centres offer a vital opportunity to redress this imbalance and the Tickell Review of Early Years published in March 2011 concludes that a good early years education is second only to the family in its ability positively to affect a child’s development. Children’s Centres also go beyond the provision of early years education and aim holistically to meet the needs of the whole family. In doing so, they act as multi-agency hubs and provide a range of crucial family support. This includes a range of courses and activities ranging from English as a Second Language (ESOL) and parenting classes, to family learning and domestic violence counselling. However, there is still scope to improve the coordination of services for parents in the crucial time between conception and the child’s first birthday, where a wide range of services exist but are not effectively enough coordinated, making life unnecessarily complex for new parents and leading to some services not being effectively targeted at those that need them most.

Education

Primary and secondary education also plays a pivotal role in ensuring that all children meet their potential. In recent years, educational attainment in Islington schools has significantly improved, with notable successes such as young black and minority ethnic boys now exceeding the national average at GCSE. However, socioeconomic background still provides the best indicator of future educational achievement, with children from wealthy backgrounds outperforming children from poorer backgrounds.

School can also be particularly useful in providing children from deprived backgrounds access to opportunities they may not have at home, such as computers and access to sports facilities. Breakfast and after-school clubs in schools can also act as low-cost childcare, making it easier for parents to work, which improves the life chances of the whole family.

Islington Council is also corporate parent to hundreds of children in care. It has a responsibility to ensure that these children enjoy the same opportunities as those not in its care.

Recommendation 7: The first year, and before

What happens during pregnancy and a child’s first year is crucial to a child’s life chances.

- There should be a major review of all public sector activity in Islington to support parents, and parents-to-be, from the point of a child’s conception to its first birthday. In particular, this should look at significantly improving the coordination of services between GPs, Midwives, Health Visitors and the Council.

Recommendation 8: Early years

Investment in early years is vital to give every child the best start in life.

- To ensure that all children benefit from the developmental opportunities of early year provision, Islington should increase the take-up of free early years places by deprived families to 100% by 2014. To help reach this ambitious goal, a coalition of learning organisations including Islington Council, London Metropolitan University and City and Islington College should design a range of courses, including English as a Second Language courses, to suit the needs of parents whose children take up the 15 hours per week free childcare offer.

Recommendation 9: Affordable childcare

A lack of affordable childcare is a serious barrier to parents returning to work.

- Islington Council and its partners should establish a 'Childcare Coalition', involving schools, public sector organisations, the voluntary sector and employers to increase the amount of affordable childcare available in the borough, including, for example, by protecting the extended schools offer despite cuts to its funding. The 'Childcare Coalition' should also work to persuade employers to support parents in working flexibly around childcare provision.

Recommendation 10: Education

Besides employment, education is the best way to make Islington fair.

- Islington should reach and exceed national performance at ages 5, 11, 16 and 19 and narrow the gap in outcomes between pupils and students from different socioeconomic backgrounds by 2014 by ensuring that the Pupil Premium is used to maximum benefit for deprived children, including targeted help with reading; maintain access for all schoolchildren to breakfast, play, youth, homework, holiday and enriching after-school opportunities to support children's learning and development; and offer a guaranteed progression route for Islington children who get the necessary grades from school to college to university in the borough.

Community – *strong communities, where everyone is respected, valued and able to engage in civic life*

'We need to take a bold approach which involves real people deciding their own future themselves', Islington resident

Volunteering

Islington has a historically strong sense of communal life and a thriving voluntary and community sector. The Commission has heard evidence from numerous community groups who are taking action to improve the wellbeing and life chances of local residents. These groups often operate with very little money and their volunteers often give up their time free of charge. These often ultra-local groups, set up by the communities which they serve, can often be very responsive and effective in tackling fairness issues at a grassroots level in a way that cannot be addressed through the statutory sector. Islington has over 1,760 documented voluntary and community sector organisations engaging with local residents – almost three times the national average – and a programme is underway to further develop 'community hubs'.

Almost a quarter of Islington residents volunteer at least once a month. Volunteering linked to professional skills such as law, accountancy, administration or IT can also be extremely beneficial to develop the capacity of local organisations and transfer skills across the community. There are many local employers that encourage their staff to volunteer and allow staff time off work to make this happen. This can be an effective way of bridging the gap between the 'Two Islington's' and creating opportunities for residents from different communities to share the same space. By focusing on the assets that the volunteer can offer, volunteering can also help vulnerable people to feel part of the mainstream and give them an opportunity to contribute to community life in the borough,

The Commission's work also identified evidence of a significant number of residents who are isolated. These residents may find it hard to make their voice heard, feel out of sight and out of mind, or be in need of support and not know where to go for it. Older people and disabled people were highlighted as a key group that may experience social isolation, but there are also other groups for whom this may be a problem. The exclusion of vulnerable people from the community poses a challenge for fairness, and also means Islington as a whole does not benefit from the assets they can bring. There are a number of examples of initiatives which have successfully targeted these hard-to-reach groups, including buddying and befriending schemes, and, notably, Help On Your Doorstep, recognising that the new frontline is not the school gate or the surgery door but the doorstep, taking services closer to users who are furthest from support..

Public spaces

The Commission notes the importance of community assets such as public spaces in bringing the community together. The success of community gardens was particularly highlighted: Islington has the smallest amount of green space of any London borough, making it all the more important that we use what we have as effectively as possible.

Everyone who lives and works in Islington should have a stake and a say in what happens in their community.

Recommendation 11: Volunteering

Volunteering time and money is a good way of challenging poverty and inequality in our borough.

- Islington Giving should be supported in its continuing efforts to recruit and deploy 500+ new volunteers in the borough by 2014; to tackle isolation, especially among older people and disabled people, by providing small grants, eg to allow people to join a gym or club; and to establish a major, new 'Good Neighbours' scheme to reduce isolation, particularly among older people, and build community spirit in the borough.
- Islington Council should attempt, with the Islington Volunteer Centre, to coordinate the volunteering time it affords its employees, in terms of how, where and when it is spent, so that such efforts are as useful as possible to Islington recipients in greatest need.

Recommendation 12: Public space

We need to reclaim communal spaces in Islington for community use.

- Islington Council and partners should identify all unused communal space in Islington, especially on estates, to free it up, make it accessible and use it, following the example of successful projects such as Edible Islington and the London Orchard Project.

Safety – low levels of crime and antisocial behaviour, and less fear of it.

'We all want to live in a safe environment', Islington resident

Islington has one of the highest crime rates in the country. Last year there were more than 28,000 crimes reported in the borough. Both crime and fear of crime are regularly reported as two of the key concerns for Islington residents, although residents' confidence in the police has improved in the past year.

In addition to the direct effects of crime, crime and fear of crime can also be socially divisive and lead to increased isolation. During the day, 87% of residents say they feel safe, but at night the figure is less than 50%. Women feel less safe after dark and older people feel less safe than other age groups.

Levels of crime vary across Islington, with both Finsbury Park and St Mary's wards recording levels of violence against the person 60% higher than the borough average. The Commission notes the importance of targeting police resources geographically at areas of greatest need and at the times when there is most crime.

The Commission wishes to acknowledge the invaluable work done by Volunteers in Policing and Special Constables who give up their time to make us all safer. It also encourages Islington residents to participate in police-public consultative forums, such as Safer Neighbourhood Panels and the Islington Community Safety Board. The Commission recognises the important work under way between the Council, police and partners to review and improve the response to antisocial behaviour currently on offer in Islington. And it endorses Government work to explore the viability of introducing minimum alcohol pricing.

Recommendation 13: Antisocial behaviour

Antisocial behaviour damages communities and contributes to social isolation.

- A single point of contact should be established for reporting antisocial behaviour, requiring collaboration between Housing Associations, Homes for Islington, Islington Police and the Council. This should enable a more effective and efficient approach to tackling antisocial behaviour, particularly on estates.

Recommendation 14: Fallout from crime

Tackling crime is about more than just dealing with its perpetrators.

- All agencies engaged in tackling offending behaviour should work closely together to ensure that the impact of that behaviour both on the victims of the crime and the familial networks of offenders is properly understood and mitigated where possible.

Housing – *a secure, decent, affordable home for everyone, and an end to overcrowding*

'We just wish finally to have a three bedroom house, for my teenage son's and daughter's sakes', Islington resident

Access to secure, decent, affordable and appropriately sized housing is vital to people's life chances. Research suggests that poor quality housing and overcrowding can negatively affect family life, children's development and physical and mental health. While the Commission commends the Council's major house-building effort, Islington is a popular central London borough with limited space for new development. This means that demand for housing is very high and there are few vacancies among the roughly 33,000 rented social housing properties in the borough. Overcrowding is a significant problem in the borough, with roughly 6,000 households estimated to fall into this category, two thirds of which are in social housing properties. At the last count, in April 2010, there were 355 families in Islington who were severely over-crowded, which means that they were two bedrooms short of what they need. Islington Council is striving to provide more affordable, family-sized social housing, not least by implementing policy that requires 50 per cent of all new-build to be affordable housing. The Commission also commends the Council's ongoing efforts to ensure that all residents affected by imminent changes to housing benefit are offered support to minimise the impact on their housing situation and assist them in making claims and other changes that will minimise the negative impacts of these changes.

Ensuring that the allocation process for social housing is transparent and effective is essential for addressing fairness in housing. Islington has more than 12,000 people on the housing register but only 5,000 households whose level of need is sufficient for them to qualify for Choice Based Lettings. It currently takes an average of 54 days to determine an individual's level of need. The Commission understands that Homes for Islington and the Council's Housing Team are examining how to improve communication and systems for reviewing applications to speed up the process and ensure that vulnerable applicants are quickly identified.

Under-occupation

The under-occupancy of larger social accommodation limits Islington's ability to re-house families living in overcrowded conditions to appropriately sized properties. 1,626 under-occupied properties were identified between March and November 2010. Under-occupancy is particularly prevalent among older people whose families have moved away. The issue often negatively affects the under-occupier as well, as they can remain stuck in properties that are too big for them and are difficult to maintain. The Council has an under-occupancy team which makes a positive offer to help people around retirement age to move on by finding them a new home and helping them with issues such as moving and redecorating. It needs to keep up its information campaign to publicise down-sizing opportunities, maintain a prioritised list of all under-occupiers in social housing in the borough and speed up the down-sizing interview process. Last year, to its credit, the team helped 150 people to down-size. This is important work and needs to be built on.

Empty property

The Commission heard that there is a substantial amount of property in Islington that is not currently in use, particularly vacant rooms above shops, pubs and restaurants and vacant commercial properties such as empty office spaces and disused shops. The Commission notes that existing policy makes converting the use of a property from commercial to residential use difficult. Policy currently also takes little account of where such a property is in the borough, whether it is in a commercially thriving area or part of the borough where it is unlikely to attract new commercial occupiers.

Recommendation 15: Under-occupation

Islington needs to tackle over-crowding by reducing under-occupancy through supporting down-sizing.

- Islington Council should make an even more attractive down-sizing offer to under-occupiers by exploring the potential for three-way swaps; holding local swap meetings; ensuring a move happens within a year; and getting people who have down-sized to speak to people who are eligible to do so about the benefits.

Recommendation 16: Empty property

In a borough with so much housing need, we cannot afford so much empty space.

- Islington Council should strive to bring empty space into residential use by:
 - Tackling empty space above shops through writing to all shop owners to discuss the opportunities and benefits and requiring relevant staff, eg Town Centre Managers, Environmental Health officers and Trading Standards officers, to enquire about space above shops as part of their routine.
 - Identifying empty space in commercial buildings for conversion for residential use, especially properties that have remained empty for some time and those that are in residential rather than commercial areas.

Health – everyone enjoying a good quality of physical and mental health.

'Deprivation and health inequalities are inextricably linked', Islington resident

People in different social circumstances experience inequalities in health, well-being and life expectancy. In England, people living in the poorest neighbourhoods will, on average, die seven years earlier than people living in the richest neighbourhoods. The impact of socioeconomic conditions on health outcomes is exacerbated when one considers the disabilities caused by long-term conditions such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. People in better-off neighbourhoods can expect to live 17 years longer than people in poorer neighbourhoods before developing these kinds of disabilities. This means that people in poorer areas not only die sooner, but they will also spend more of their shorter lives with a disabling condition.

The weight of evidence points to the fact that this very significant gap in health outcomes does not arise by chance, and cannot be attributed simply to genetic makeup, unhealthy behaviour, or difficulties in access to medical care, although these factors are obviously important. Income is a particularly important determinant of health as it is often a driver of other factors such as quality of early life, education, employment and working conditions.

To address health inequality the Marmot Review published by the Government in 2010 suggests that funding should be used to improve the health needs of everybody in the community, with a scale and intensity that is proportionate to the level of disadvantage. Greater intensity of action is likely to be needed for those with greater social and economic disadvantage. Marmot calls this 'proportionate universalism'. In this vein, Islington Council is prioritising elderly residents for insulation, affordable warmth, flu vaccination and falls-prevention programmes.

In Islington, the biggest killers are cardiovascular disease (CVD) and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), exacerbated by poor diet, lack of exercise, smoking and drinking. Men can expect on average to live 75.1 years, 2.8 years less than the England average and the lowest in London, and women in Islington can expect to live 81.0 years, less than the England average and the fourth lowest in London. Outcomes vary significantly by ward in Islington. For example, men from the worst-off backgrounds live 6.7 years less than men from the best-off backgrounds. There is also national and local evidence which suggests that some ethnic groups and those with mental health difficulties have particular issues which need to be addressed and those with learning difficulties have particular problems accessing appropriate health care.

NHS Islington published its Health Inequality Strategy, *Closing the Gap*, in June 2010. The paper sets out its strategy for tackling health inequality in Islington over the next 20 years by preventing early deaths, promoting healthy lifestyles and addressing the socioeconomic determinants of health. There are also many community groups in the borough who play a role in promoting healthy lifestyles for particular communities. In many instances, family, neighbours and other peers have greater influence about the choices people make to improve their health than any public bodies.

Recommendation 17: Children's health

Good health in childhood is essential to a fairer Islington.

- NHS Islington and Islington Council should: support all schools in Islington to achieve 'enhanced healthy schools' status and all children's centres to achieve 'healthy children's

centre' status; ensure every child has free vitamin drops up to the age of 5 years; undertake an inequalities analysis of immunisation uptake, to ensure that effort to support this programme is adequately targeted; seek to reduce the number (or at least check the further proliferation) of fast food outlets near schools.

Recommendation 18: Health inequalities

Proportionate universalism in health means an element of targeting.

- The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) produced by NHS Islington and Islington Council provides a strong evidence base for action to improve public health in the borough. A clear plan of action needs to be agreed across the public sector to address the main problems the JSNA highlights. This will allow targeted responses to populations in need, including preventive programmes tailored to the needs of deprived or excluded groups, such as people with learning difficulties or serious mental health problems, homeless people and older people, in response to their greater need.

Recommendation 19: Mental health

Times of economic hardship are stressful, so we must up support for mental health.

- NHS Islington needs to increase the number of people accessing support for depression and anxiety, particularly with levels of unemployment rising and increasing financial hardship which will increase mental ill-health in the borough, especially among the poorest.

Recommendation 20: Exercise

Islington's health would benefit if more people (from all backgrounds) cycled.

- Islington Council should negotiate with the Mayor of London and Transport for London to make it easier to cycle in Islington by getting the Barclays Bikes scheme extended further north into the borough and by getting the Freedom Pass to work on these Barclays Bikes.

What next

The Islington Fairness Commission is now drawing to a close. However, the hard work of making Islington a fairer place to live and work is far from over. It will be vital that the Commission's recommendations are strongly advocated by all those involved in it, disseminated widely, and their implementation closely monitored. To this end, a written report on progress against delivering the Commission's recommendations will be given to the Council's Communities Review Committee six-monthly and annually to Full Council. Moreover, beyond the boundaries of Islington, those involved in the Commission process should seek to offer leadership on a drive for fairness and related campaigns across London and nationally. A year of research and a final report are just the start: now the hard work of making our aspiration for a fairer Islington real begins.

DRAFT

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference

Background

Despite the pockets of affluence for which it is known, the London Borough of Islington is now the fourteenth most deprived local authority in England (CLG IMD March 2011). Improving the life chances of residents, especially in the more deprived parts of the borough, is the central task of the incoming Council.

We are clear about some of the ways this will happen: more social housing, universal free school meals and cutting crime, which disproportionately affects the least well off. However, over recent years the Council's power and influence have been extended over a range of other areas, including economic development, public health and SureStart, which are fundamental to making Islington a fairer place. It is in this context that the Commission will consider in depth and in detail how we can level the playing field in Islington, address persistent issues of poverty and exclusion, and advance equality of opportunity in our borough. The Commission's deliberations will need to be set against the backdrop of national economic recession and recovery, deficit reduction and cuts to services which threaten to impact disproportionately upon the most disadvantaged in our community.

The Commission's findings will be used to establish a strong vision to guide the work of Islington's strategic partnership and partner organisations and to provide further structure and direction for the Administration's work in its first term.

The Commission's clear focus is on tackling poverty and inequality to make Islington a fairer place. A fairer Islington means a better Islington, for everyone who lives and works there.

Agenda

The Commission will focus on areas in which the potential for the Council and partners to exert power and influence – and so make a real difference – is greatest. It will address both poverty and inequality, in terms of both opportunity and outcome. It will recognise the importance of wellbeing as well as wealth. It will avoid framing topics by departmental or organisational silos, avoid duplicating work occurring elsewhere in the borough, and recognise the financial constraints that the Council and partners have to operate within.

The Commission will need in its deliberations to consider issues of health, housing, family, community, social care, education, equalities, skills and training, employment, crime and safety, democracy, sustainability, the environment and the economy. The membership of the Commission reflects this agenda.

The Commission will meet in public at 7.30pm – 10.00pm on dates as follows:

19 th July 2010	Assembly Room	1) Two Islingtons: understanding the problem
7 th Sept 2010	Andover Estate	2) Closing the gap from the bottom up
2 nd Nov 2010	Slaughter and May	3) Closing the gap from the top down
7 th Dec 2010	House on the Rock	4) Fair budgets: tough choices
11 th Jan 2011	Highbury Grove School	5) Hidden voices
15 th Feb 2011	Bemerton Estate	6) Health inequalities
28 th April 2011	Assembly Room	7) Plan of action: agree final report

The Commission will hold five of its seven meetings outside of the Town Hall in a variety of locations around the borough – taking it out into the communities it concerns.

Testimony

At each of its meetings the Commission will hear evidence from a number of witnesses drawn from the local community, service providers, outside experts and others.

Outputs

An interim report in early December 2010, to inform Islington Council's 2011-12 Corporate Plan, its 2011-12 Budget, and how any remaining reward grant money is distributed.

A final report in April 2011, to set the long-term strategy for Islington Council's work for the years ahead, informing the Sustainable Communities Strategy and the work of the Strategic Partnership.

Outcomes

A concrete, evidence-based plan for what to do to make Islington a fairer place to live and work, during and beyond the first term of this Council. This will shape the corporate strategy, priorities and spending of the London Borough of Islington and guide our negotiations with partners.

Appendix 2 – Members

1. **Councillor Andy Hull** (Islington Council)
2. **Professor Anne Power** (Head of Housing and Communities, LSE)
3. **Councillor Catherine West** (Leader, Islington Council)
4. **Councillor Charlynn Pullen** (Islington Council)
5. **Councillor Claudia Webbe** (Islington Council)
6. **Councillor Faye Whaley** (Islington Council)
7. **Frank McLoughlin** (Principal, City & Islington College)
8. **Gary Heather** (Chair, Islington Trades Council)
9. **Helen Pettersen** (Chief Executive, NHS Islington)
10. **Councillor Joe Caluori** (Islington Council)
11. **John Foster** (Chief Executive, Islington Council)
12. **Kristina Glenn** (Director, Cripplegate)
13. **Councillor Lorraine Constantinou** (Islington Council)
14. **Councillor Mick O’Sullivan** (Islington Council)
15. **Chief Superintendent Mike Wise** (Borough Commander, Islington Police)
16. **Richard Bunting** (Chair, Islington Conservatives)
17. **Professor Richard Wilkinson** (Emeritus Professor, University of Nottingham)
18. **Ronke Lawal** (Chief Executive, Islington Chamber of Commerce)
19. **Theresa Coyle** (Chair, Homes for Islington)
20. **Councillor Tracy Ismail** (Islington Council)

Appendix 3 – Observers

1. **Emily Thornberry MP** (Member of Parliament for Islington South and Finsbury)
2. **Jennette Arnold AM** (Greater London Assembly Member for Islington)
3. **Jeremy Corbyn MP** (Member of Parliament for Islington North)
4. **Councillor Richard Greening** (Deputy Leader, Islington Council)
5. **Councillor Richard Watts** (Executive Member for Children’s Services, Islington Council)

Appendix 4 – Officers

1. Alistair Smith
2. Alva Bailey
3. Andrew Berry
4. Andrew Nye
5. Becky Dibben
6. Catherine Wright
7. Charlotte Daly
8. Chris Hynes
9. Chris Roe
10. Dionne Gay
11. Eleanor Schooling
12. Emma Louisy
13. Heather Scowby
14. Jacqueline Broadhead
15. James Ruiz
16. Jon Winder
17. Karen Lucas
18. Kate Dixon
19. Katie Furniss
20. Keith Stanger
21. Kevin O’Leary
22. Lela Kogbara
23. Leo Trinick
24. Lorraine Fahey
25. Louise Round
26. Lucy Vaughan
27. Mike Curtis
28. Naomi de Berker
29. Olivia Fellas
30. Paul Warren
31. Peter Moore
32. Peter Murphy
33. Ramani Chelliah
34. Ruth Chapman
35. Sarah Price
36. Sean McLaughlin
37. Shane Lynch
38. Sian Williams
39. Steen Smedegaard
40. Tania Townsend
41. Thanos Morphitis
42. Tim Collins
43. Vicky Manser

Appendix 5 – Methodology

1. Public meetings x 7 (attended by 500+ different members of the public) including:
 - a. Minutes
 - b. Evidence papers
 - c. Presentations
 - d. Testimony from witnesses
 - e. Discussion among Commissioners
 - f. Contributions from the public
2. Debrief meetings x 7 (for officers only)
 - a. Planning papers
3. Private meetings x 5 (for Commissioners only)
 - a. Minutes
 - b. Evidence papers
 - c. Presentations
 - d. Discussion among Commissioners
4. Satellite activity:
 - a. Door-knocking on estates
 - b. LBI Problem Solving Team meetings x 4
 - c. Various bilateral meetings
 - d. Presentations to:
 - i. London Councils Scrutiny Network
 - ii. London Equality Group
 - iii. St Luke's Church
 - iv. Islington Community Network
 - v. Holloway Neighbourhood Group
 - vi. Islington Pensioners Forum
 - vii. Disability Action in Islington
 - viii. LBI staff meeting
5. Submissions from the public x 90 (some people made submissions more than once)
6. Publicity
 - a. Website: www.islington.gov.uk
 - b. Press releases x 7
 - c. Flyers x 7

Appendix 6 - Witnesses

1. **Andy Greene** (Disability Action in Islington)
2. **Carey Oppenheim** (Chair, London Child Poverty Commission)
3. **Carole Turner** (Elfrida Society)
4. **Claire Tunley** (Head of Business and Town Centres, Islington Council)
5. **Edmund Marriott** (Elfrida Society)
6. **Eleanor Schooling** (Director of Children's Services, Islington Council)
7. **Iyiola Olafimihan** (Disability Action in Islington)
8. **Councillor James Murray** (Executive Member for Housing, Islington Council)
9. **Jan Hart** (Assistant Director, Environment and Regeneration, Islington Council)
10. **John Worker** (Chair, Islington Pensioners Forum)
11. **Ken Kanu** (Director, Help on Your Doorstep)
12. **Kristina Glenn** (Director, Cripplegate Foundation)
13. **Lela Kogbara** (Director of Strategy and Partnerships, Islington Council)
14. **Linda Doherty** (Elfrida Society)
15. **Lloyd Marcus-Brown** (Elfrida Society)
16. **Maria Ferriter** (Parent Champion, Islington Council)
17. **Mark Bennett** (Partner, Slaughter and May)
18. **Martin Baillie** (Welfare Rights Team, Islington Council)
19. **Matthew Bolton** (North London Organiser, London Citizens)
20. **Michelline Safi Ngongo** (Chair, Light Project International)
21. **Ch Supt Mike Wise** (Islington Borough Commander, Metropolitan Police Service)
22. **Nabeel Akram** (Elfrida Society)
23. **Peter Jones** (Chair, Islington Borough User Group)
24. **Rachel Ambler** (Consultant Midwife in Public Health, Whittington Hospital)
25. **Councillor Richard Greening** (Executive Member for Finance, Islington Council)
26. **Professor Richard Wilkinson** (Chair, Islington Fairness Commission)
27. **Safia Ali** (Chair, Fit Women Group)
28. **Sandy Marks** (Disability Action in Islington)
29. **Sarah Price** (Director of Public Health, Islington Council)
30. **Sean McLaughlin** (Director of Health and Adult Social Services, Islington Council)
31. **Sirtaj Rahman** (Project Manager, Finsbury Park Homeless Project)
32. **Tom Jupp** (Chair, Islington Giving)
33. **Vince Bottomley** (Elfrida Society)
34. **Yvonne Swift** (Elfrida Society)

Appendix 7 - Submissions

1. Adam Roberts
2. All Change
3. Arbours Association
4. Councillor Arthur Graves
5. AS Hull
6. Bemerton Village Tenant Management Organisation
7. Bob Dowd
8. Children's Voices in Family Law
9. Chris Graham
10. Claire Milne
11. Clive Bebee
12. Corinne Dhondee
13. Diane Brace
14. Disability Action in Islington
15. EC1 New Deal for Communities
16. Elfrida Society
17. Frances Davidson
18. Graeme Jones
19. Helen Beck
20. Howard League for Penal Reform
21. Islington Childcare Trust
22. Islington Clients of Drug and Alcohol Services
23. Islington Environment Forum
24. Islington Law Centre
25. Islington LINK
26. Islington Pensioners Forum
27. Islington Play Association
28. The Islington Society
29. Islington Refugee Forum
30. Islington Strategic Partnership and Environment and Sustainability Board
31. Jack G
32. Jean Bayliss
33. Jeff Higgins
34. Jenni Hall
35. Jeremy Killingray
36. Jessica Green
37. John Kolm-Murray
38. John Wachter
39. Joy Uguoko
40. Julia Cameron
41. Justine Gordon-Smith
42. Kevin Kelleher
43. Liam Devany
44. LBI Public Protection
45. London Metropolitan University
46. Lucy Watson
47. Malcolm Clark
48. Mary Stevens
49. Maura Griffin
50. Michael Calderbank

51. NHS Islington
52. One Society
53. R Searle
54. Rakhia Ismail
55. Rob Hull
56. Ruth Hayes
57. SHINE
58. St Luke's Parochial Trust
59. The Sunday Club
60. TA Jones
61. Thomas Cooper
62. UNISON
63. Virginia Lowe
64. Vivian Smith
65. Voluntary Action in Islington
66. Wendy Sharman
67. Women's Association for Africa Networking and Development
68. Zoya Sears

Some of the above contributors submitted more than one submission.

Appendix 8: Costs (£)

Date	Venue	Hire	Sign language	A/V	Design and print	Staff	Expenses and incidentals	Total
19/07/2010	Assembly Hall	250	350	0				600
07/09/2010	Andover Estate	100	350	500				950
02/11/2010	Slaughter and May	0	350	0				350
07/12/2010	House on the Rock	740	350	500				1,590
11/01/2011	Highbury Grove School	100	350	500				950
15/02/2011	Bemerton Estate	100	350	500				950
28/04/2011	Assembly Hall	250	350	500				1,100
					3,500	1,000	3,000	7,500
		1,540	2,450	2,500	3,500	1,000	3,000	13,990

Appendix 9 – Coverage

Anthony Painter (2010) 'In Praise of...', 21 July

Avrupa (2010) 'Fairness Commission will tackle inequality in Islington', 21 July

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Islington Tribune (2010) 'We Must Mobilise Massive Campaign to Fight Cuts "Obscenity"' 10 September

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Appendix 11 – Interim report



Bringing the two Islingtons together

www.islington.gov.uk/fairness

The Islington Fairness Commission

Interim Report

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Foreword

In a period when the government is having to make difficult judgments as to how far it can reduce national debt without choking off economic growth, it might be thought that the challenge of creating a fairer society is a luxury which will have to wait. But as public services are cut, fairness matters more than ever: the need for public services – for police, health care, drug rehabilitation, prisons and social services – is powerfully determined by how fair or unfair our society is. Even the potential for a ‘Big Society’, in which voluntary services and local communities shoulder more of the burden, is dramatically reduced when the gap between rich and poor grows wider. Community life in societies with bigger income differences has repeatedly been shown to be weaker. The statistics bear out the old intuition that inequality is divisive and the enemy of social cohesion.

The gap between rich and poor is now twice as big in Britain as in the more equal of the rich developed market democracies. That is worrying because the level of inequality is one of the most powerful drivers of the level of health and social problems which a society has to cope with. Britain’s large income differences inevitably put a special strain on almost all local services. Ideally, cuts to public services would take place against a backdrop of diminishing inequality. The need for services would decline with public expenditure.

In a recent report for the London Sustainable Development Commission, it was estimated that if the scale of income differences between rich and poor were reduced to what it is in countries like Japan, Norway, Sweden and Finland, the murder rate might be halved, the teenage birth rate and rates of mental illness might fall by as much as two-thirds and life expectancy would improve. In those circumstances cuts in public services would be less painful.

It is often assumed that many health and social problems become more frequent lower down the social ladder because the most vulnerable members of society tend to move down the hierarchy while the more resilient move up. But that would not explain why more unequal societies tend to suffer more, sometimes dramatically more, from almost all the problems which become more common lower down the social ladder – from low standards of child wellbeing and greater inequality in life chances, to bigger prison populations and more drug abuse.

An alternative view is that these problems are more common at the bottom of society because they are somehow caused directly by bricks and mortar, by poorer physical circumstances themselves. But when economic growth raises living standards in society as a whole, that has little or no impact on the prevalence of these problems. The evidence shows that most – whether we are talking about violence, poor health, teenage births or mental illness – are products of increased social status differentiation itself and the way that can make people feel devalued, disrespected, insecure and worried about how they are seen and judged by others.

The Islington Fairness Commission was set up to improve the quality of life in the borough by making it a fairer place for all who live and work in it. Islington is marked by some of the biggest contrasts in wealth and poverty in the country. Despite being one of the richest boroughs, it also has amongst the highest levels of deprivation and it is of course these differences which provide the foundations on which class distinctions are built. It is inconsistent to want a classless society but to tolerate high levels of inequality in income and wealth.

As well as the costs in terms of the burden of health and social problems which local services have to cope with, widening income differences nationally have resulted in a weakening of community life, an increase in status competition and consumerism and an increase in some of the harder and more anti-social aspects of life in the public sphere. The public services in

Islington, represented on the Commission, will do what they can to increase fairness and reduce inequality in order to promote wellbeing and a more cohesive local society. But moving towards a fairer society is not something which one local authority and its partners, however well intentioned, can achieve on their own.

Many of the ways people might think a Council, for example, could reduce income differences are not within its power. Councils cannot shift more of the burden of Council Tax from the poor to the rich: the ratio of one tax band to another is fixed by law. The Council's influence among local employers is largely a matter of persuasion. The ways in which public bodies can use their choice of suppliers to influence pay and employment policies is also severely limited. However, the Council can pay its own staff at least the London Living Wage and provide leadership to local employers in both the public and private sectors to do the same. Amongst its own staff, pay differentials between the lowest and highest paid should not exceed 1:12.

This report considers other ways in which income differences in the borough can be reduced and other sources of inequality can be tackled – in employment opportunities, housing, the care of the elderly and in children's life chances and educational opportunities. It also outlines the principles which can guide the cuts that have to be made by the public sector in Islington as a result of the reduction in grants from the government. The path which has led, on the one hand, from the need to rescue banks from the financial consequences of decisions made by their senior staff, to cutting services on which many of the least well-off depend, is not a path which many would regard as fair. But the Council and partners can only choose where to make the cuts, and will endeavour to minimise the pain they will inevitably cause.

The Islington Fairness Commission has held a series of meetings throughout the borough. The large numbers of the public who have attended them shows that there is a growing recognition of the importance of these issues and a widespread desire for change. But making Britain a substantially more equal society will, as other major changes have in the past, require continued campaigning and an enduring social movement dedicated to this end. Islington and a number of other local authorities around the country are leading the way.

Emeritus Professor Richard Wilkinson
Co-author of *The Spirit Level*
Chair of The Islington Fairness Commission

Introduction

The Islington Fairness Commission was launched in the summer of 2010. The Commission is an independent initiative chaired by Professor Richard Wilkinson, who co-authored *The Spirit Level*, a book which provides extensive evidence that more equal societies deliver better outcomes for everyone in them across almost all indicators of quality of life. Other Commissioners are drawn from Islington Council, NHS Islington, Islington Police, Homes for Islington, City & Islington College, Cripplegate Foundation, Islington Trades Union Council, London School of Economics and Islington Chamber of Commerce. The Commission met in public four times in 2010 in locations around the borough, considered evidence papers, took testimony in person from a variety of witnesses and received a large number of submissions from Islington residents, businesses, public and voluntary sector organisations. This Interim Report is intended to provide a brief update on the Commission's progress and to summarise its direction of travel at the end of 2010, half way through its term.

This Interim Report therefore seeks only at this stage to:

- introduce the Commission
- establish the context in which its work is taking place
- articulate The Islington Fairness Framework which it has developed to shape its thinking
- set out a short selection of its evidence and analysis to date
- signpost the direction of travel towards its Final Report
- provide a limited set of examples, for illustrative purposes only, of the sort of recommendations for all parts of Islington's community which will feature in its Final Report

This Interim Report does not attempt to:

- detail the methodology the Commission has employed or the broad array of activity it has undertaken
- offer a comprehensive or exhaustive treatment of the wealth of information the Commission has heard, received and considered so far
- address in depth how the evidence heard to date relates to any specific sections of the Islington community, such as older people, disabled people or carers
- make new recommendations for action

These will all feature instead in the Final Report of the Commission, which will be discussed in draft at a public Commission meeting on 28 April 2011 and then revised prior to its final publication and a debate on it scheduled for the Full Council meeting on 30 June 2011.

The Final Report of the Commission will provide a basis for everyone who lives or works in Islington to play a part in shaping the future of the borough and improving the opportunities and wellbeing of everyone who lives or works in it. Islington Council and other key local players will also use the work of the Fairness Commission to inform their corporate planning and annual budget setting processes.

Context

Islington is now facing government cuts on a scale not seen since the Second World War. The proposed funding cut to the police, health and council services in Islington is estimated to be £335m per year by 2015. Islington Council's share of this will be £100m of cuts in the next four years – a third of its net total budget. This includes facing almost £50m of cuts in the next financial year alone. Alongside other deprived London Boroughs like Hackney and Tower Hamlets, Islington is among the hardest hit in the capital. By 2015 there will also be an estimated £57m reduction in benefit payments to Islington residents. Against this backdrop, it will be even more challenging to make Islington a fairer place than it has been in the past.

While, as an independent body, the Commission is not responsible for the Council's budget or that of any other organisation in the borough, it seeks to exert a progressive, egalitarian influence over Islington's major budget-setting processes, this year and in the future.

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The Islington Fairness Framework

The Islington Fairness Framework (see Box 1) has been developed by the Commission to provide a robust theoretical underpinning for its work:

Box 1: The Islington Fairness Framework

Purpose

The purpose of The Islington Fairness Commission is to make Islington a fairer place to live and work. All the organisations represented on the Commission are committed to this mission.

Definition

To make Islington fairer means reducing poverty and inequality in the areas that matter most to Islington people's life chances.

Timeframe

The Commission is focused primarily on inspiring change that is deliverable in the period 2010-2014, although it is also mindful of the longer term beyond that.

Strategy

A strategic approach to this task, including the whole community, must operate at three levels:

Fair Policy – ensuring fairness in the priorities we set and the policies we pursue.

Fair Practice – ensuring fairness in the way we turn these priorities and policies into practice, including the ways we do business and spend money.

Fair People – ensuring fairness in enabling all parts of Islington's community to have a stake and a say in the borough's future, and to play an active and joined-up role in developing it.

Priorities

The priority areas that matter most to Islington people's life chances are:

Work – work for those who are able to work, everyone earning a living income, and less income inequality.

Families – supporting families to give all children a good start in life, particularly through high quality early years provision and high standards in schools.

Community – strong communities, where everyone is respected, valued and able to engage in civic life.

Safety – low levels of crime and antisocial behaviour, and less fear of it.

Housing – a secure, decent, affordable home for everyone, and an end to overcrowding.

Health – everyone enjoying a good quality of physical and mental health.

Equalities

Equalities issues cut across all these priorities. In each of these areas, for example, people from minority ethnic backgrounds, people with disabilities and women can all fare worse, and tackling this is vital to ensuring fairness.

Evidence

Overview

Box 2: Inequality in Islington – key facts

- Nearly half of Islington's children live in poverty and almost all of these children are part of workless families.
- Pupils from poorer families perform less well at school than those from wealthier backgrounds. There is a 10% gap in achievement of Level 4 at Key Stage 2 Mathematics between children eligible for free school meals and those not eligible.
- Working age residents without qualifications are four times more likely to be workless than those with a degree level qualification.
- On average, the lowest paid workers in Islington earn only a quarter of the earnings of better paid workers.
- Women live significantly longer than men on average, but there are also significant differences in life expectancy dependant on where you live in the borough. Men in Islington have the lowest life expectancy in London.
- Unemployment among Islington's BME residents is twice the unemployment rate among white residents.
- Owner-occupiers with a mortgage earn an average gross annual income of nearly £100,000, compared to the average gross income of an Islington Council tenant which is around £15,000.
- Four hundred 16-18 year olds are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and disabled young people are nearly three times as likely to be NEET.

The headline facts on inequality in Islington are set out in Box 2 above. Tackling these inequalities is a huge challenge. Despite the pockets of affluence for which it is known, Islington is the eighth most deprived local authority in England.

Work

Box 3: Child poverty and worklessness – key facts

- 11,000 parents and their 18,000 children in Islington live below 60% of average income. That means that 46% of children in Islington are classed as living below the poverty line. This is the second highest rate in the country.
- Poverty on this scale is overwhelmingly associated with workless families. Reforms to welfare benefits proposed by the Government are likely to make the situation even more challenging for parents. Many parents will require support to ensure that they are not under-claiming the benefits they are entitled to as well as support to prepare for employment.
- Working 16 hours a week is currently sufficient to lift these families just above the poverty threshold. However, the reasons why parents are workless are many and varied. For many of these parents lack of relevant skills or low confidence may mean they require a range of employment support pathways as well as support to find childcare. There are also too few entry-level jobs available for parents who are ready for employment.

Poverty in Islington is overwhelmingly associated with worklessness. There are 140,000 people in Islington of working age, although only two thirds of them are in employment. The number of people who are in work has fallen over the last year and is lower than the London average despite there being 1.3 jobs located in the borough for each resident of working age.

Islington has a relatively skilled workforce with a higher than average number of people qualified to degree level or the equivalent (47%), but 18,000 residents of working age have no qualifications at all and a further 13,000 have fewer than five GCSE passes. Four hundred 16 to 18 year olds are not in employment, education or training (NEET) and 95% of these live in families where nobody works.

The Commission recognises the range of different factors which lead to worklessness. These factors include issues such as the availability of suitable work and childcare for local people, as well as the skills and confidence of residents to join the labour force, and opportunities for work experience and apprenticeships.

Data on earned income suggests that in Islington the gross full-time earnings of the lowest earners is £351 per week compared to gross earnings of £1,127 of the top 20% of earners. In other words, the higher earners are paid nearly four times as much as the lower earners. The London Living Wage of £7.85 is the minimum wage considered by the GLA to enable people to live free from poverty in the capital. In September 2010 Islington Council announced that 150 cleaning staff would be offered a contract with the Council which guarantees London Living Wage as a minimum. This has been done without additional expense to Islington tax payers. 15 private and voluntary sector organisations that have signed up to the London Mayor's pledge to pay the London Living Wage have their head office based in Islington.

Fairness also has a role in determining the difference between the lowest paid and highest paid people in an organisation, both in terms of rewarding people in an organisation fairly for the work they do and in terms of influencing social norms. In December 2010 the Government published the Interim Report of the Hutton Review of Fair Pay which examined the case for setting income differentials in the public sector at a maximum of 1:20.

As well as fair wages – including the enforcement of minimum wage legislation across all sectors – the Commission recognises the importance of fair employment practices, not least flexible working and family friendly policies, which it will consider further in its Final Report.

Families

Evidence suggests that children's early years have the most influence on their development. Giving all children a fair start in life is crucial but this, largely, depends on the strength of the child's family. Islington offers a range of support to families, including the Family Nurse Partnership, the Adolescent Multi-Agency Support Service and the Family Intervention Project as well as a range of support through Sure Start Children's Centres.

Education is also crucial to giving young people the best start in life. Over the past 5 years Islington has improved attainment for its young people, narrowing the gap between itself, London and England. There have been particular successes with underachieving black and

minority ethnic groups. Some groups such as African Caribbean boys now exceed the national average attainment level at GCSE. However, it is still the case that pupils from poorer families perform less well at school than those from more prosperous homes. Only 73% of pupils eligible for free school meals achieved Level 4 in Mathematics at Key Stage 2 compared to 83% of pupils who were not eligible for free school meals – a gap of ten percentage points. In English the gap was 14 percentage points and in Science nine percentage points. The picture is repeated at GCSE level, although the gaps are not quite so marked. Of pupils eligible for free school meals, 63% got five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C compared to 67% of those not eligible for free school meals.

The Commission has also considered evidence on the importance of acting early to head off problems later in life, including interventions in early years before the ages of three or four, which have been highlighted as important by the Office for National Statistics. For example, all children benefit developmentally from some form of formal childcare before they start school.

Community

Box 4: Some examples of how Islington's voluntary and private sectors tackle fairness

Think Family is a volunteering project set up in partnership with the national charity Community Service Volunteers. Under the scheme, volunteers make regular visits to families and offer non-judgmental practical and emotional support to help them improve their family life. The scheme has already provided direct support to 61 'whole families' and 23 young carer 'whole families'.

Islington Law Centre provides free legal advice to low income residents on matters including debt, housing, employment and immigration.

Finsbury Park, Essex Road and South Islington Advice Projects provide free targeted welfare rights and debt advice to Somali, Bangladeshi and refugee groups in children's centres and schools. The projects had a 90% take-up of advice services in 2009.

Help on Your Doorstep is a 'door-knocking' organisation that works to empower residents by connecting them with services to address their particular needs. Last year they helped 1,158 clients and made a total of 2,429 referrals including 528 to income support agencies and 630 to housing and grant giving services.

The Macquarie Group provides back office support to voluntary sector organisations. By providing a range of assistance such as business planning, help with office relocation and IT support the group helps voluntary organisations to better deliver their front line services.

Slaughter and May staff undertake a wide range of voluntary work in the borough. Among the projects pursued is the 2010 UCAS project which saw 18 employees work on a one-to-one basis with students from Central Foundation Boys School to help them with their university applications.

Guardian News and Media has supported staff to participate in a mentoring programme with Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School for the last nine years. The company also employs a policy that allows staff to volunteer two days a year on charitable projects.

There is significant economic polarisation in Islington, with the borough ranking high on national prosperity indicators whilst simultaneously being rated as the eighth most deprived local authority in the country. The borough is also characterised by considerable ethnic diversity, with more than a quarter of residents coming from black or minority ethnic communities. The Commission has considered evidence on the importance of communities interacting in safe, shared spaces to ensure that everyone is valued and is able to make their voice heard. Ensuring protection for some of the most vulnerable in the community, including older people, disabled people, and looked-after children, is also very important. One of the issues that has come up repeatedly in evidence is the isolation and loneliness experienced by some residents, including some of those who are most vulnerable.

Evidence confirms that there is a wealth of activity carried out by residents, community groups, businesses and the voluntary sector to address fairness and equality and to harness the potential of the social capital that exists in the borough. The Commission has received considerable evidence on the role of community organisations and volunteering in helping to deliver common goals, building community cohesion, increasing social capital and developing and transferring skills. The opportunity to volunteer can also have the most impact on the most vulnerable or most isolated people in the community by making them feel part of mainstream society, reducing isolation and fostering equality.

It is also evident that many businesses in Islington make a valuable contribution to fairness and are willing to bear the cost implications of doing so. Activities range far beyond statutory minimums in terms of working conditions for staff, to how they procure goods and services from ethical suppliers and engaging in community and volunteering activities. The Commission heard evidence about how there was a common misconception about the level of need in Islington, with much corporate social activity therefore being targeted instead at neighbouring boroughs. The Commission also considered evidence about how the willingness of business to work towards fairness could be better harnessed to focus on the most pressing issues in Islington.

The charity Islington Giving, a coalition of Islington funders, businesses, residents and community organisations, was launched in September 2010 to fight poverty and create opportunity. It aims to raise at least £3m to support local people in Islington. The money raised will support three themes, namely: investing in young people, tackling poverty and confronting isolation. The campaign is also actively seeking to increase volunteering in Islington by at least 500 volunteers.

Safety

Islington has one of the highest rates of reported crime in the country. In the last 12 months there were just over 28,000 reported crimes in the borough. Crime – and the fear of crime – is not uniformly distributed throughout the borough. Violence against the person is most prevalent in Finsbury Park and St Mary's wards, both of which are over 60% higher than the Islington average. Robbery is a much less common offence but again is most common in Finsbury Park, followed by Junction and Mildmay. Clerkenwell, Bunhill and Finsbury Park are the wards with the highest rates of burglary. The wards with the lowest level of crime overall are Highbury East, Highbury West and Hillrise.

Residents regularly tell Islington police and Islington Council about their concerns about crime and antisocial behaviour. This can range from residents feeling intimidated by people hanging around, petty crime, drinking and rowdy behaviour, or badly behaved dog owners. These activities can cause a loss of amenity and increased isolation for individual residents, as well as driving a wedge between communities.

Fear of crime is measured through resident surveys. The vast majority of residents (87%) feel safe when they are out in their local area during the day, but at night less than half of residents say they feel safe. There are also significant differences between different groups' perceptions of safety. Women feel less safe than men after dark and the over 60s feel less safe than other age groups.

The Commission has also noted the commendable work done by members of our community who want themselves to help make Islington a safer place – often afforded time off work by their employers to do so – as Volunteers in Policing (VIPs) and as Special Constables.

Housing

As one of the smallest and yet most populous boroughs in London, Islington is extremely densely populated. Islington has an unusual housing profile. Approaching half the homes in the borough (44%) are social rented housing and it is estimated that approaching a quarter (24%) are private rented housing. The remaining third (32%) are owner occupied. Social renting varies between wards while owner occupation is more consistently distributed, with the exceptions of Highbury East (46%) and Bunhill (20%). The second noteworthy characteristic of the housing stock is the large proportion of flats – about four in five Islington properties is a flat.

Social housing is of enormous importance for those who currently live in it and for many thousands more who look to social housing to provide the support they need to live safe, healthy and prosperous lives. Overcrowding is a significant issue for many residents. It is estimated that over 6,000 households in the borough are overcrowded. Nearly two thirds of overcrowded households are social tenants and a further quarter are renting privately.

The Commission has, among other ideas, considered the importance of maximising the supply of affordable housing, encouraging a reduction in under-occupancy to enable over-crowded families to move into larger accommodation, and taking concerted action on illegal subletting. It is considering how to maximise the use of empty and under-occupied space in existing buildings – domestic and commercial – using incentives, enforcement powers and positive planning for flexible use of space. This includes building on Islington's track record of work with voluntary, community and not-for-profit groups to manage, repair and restore currently under-used property.

Health

Islington residents experience poorer physical and mental health that results in early deaths from cancer and circulatory disease. Islington has one of the highest levels of male suicide in the country. Islington men have the lowest life expectancy in London. This is mainly because of deprivation across all Islington wards coupled with unhealthy lifestyle choices and poor access to the right services at the right time. Deprivation and health inequalities are inextricably linked, and deprivation stands out as the main risk factor for early death and poor health in Islington. Deprivation and poverty are directly correlated with unhealthy lifestyle behaviours. The major lifestyle factors that contribute to early deaths in Islington are smoking, poor diet, low levels of

physical activity, poor mental health, alcohol and substance misuse, teenage pregnancy and sexual health. Geography matters too. Between 2003 and 2007 Clerkenwell had the highest life expectancy for men (77.8 years) and Tollington had the lowest (72.6 years) – a difference of over 5 years. For women, St George's ward had the highest life expectancy (82.5 years) and Finsbury Park had the lowest (78.1 years). The Fairness Commission will consider further evidence on health inequalities at its public meeting on 15 February 2011.

Towards a Final Report

Through the Commission process a local consensus is emerging about what Islington would look like if it was more equal and fairer for everyone. The Commission has captured what it believes a fairer Islington would look like in The Islington Fairness Framework contained in this Interim Report. In its Final Report the Commission will make detailed recommendations about how it thinks this framework can be delivered on the ground in Islington. To illustrate how the framework might be put into practice, a list of initial draft recommendations are included here, for illustrative purposes only. They are deliberately confined here to just one of the priorities the Commission has identified, namely Work, and they are restricted here to recommendations primarily for the public sector in Islington, but we hope they nonetheless give a flavour of the sort of concrete recommendations which the Commission is developing in all priority areas for all parts of the Islington community for its Final Report.

Example draft recommendations for Islington's public sector in the priority area of Work:

- Employment for Islington's residents is the best way to tackle poverty in the borough. Public sector bodies in Islington should increase the proportion of local people they employ, eg from 23% to 30% over the next 5 years in the case of Islington Council.
- Communication between Islington's employers and the borough's residents can be improved. Public sector bodies in Islington should establish a Single Employer Interface which facilitates the brokering of opportunities for employment, work experience, training, apprenticeships, volunteering and corporate social activity.
- No-one in Islington should do a hard day's work for less than they can live on. Public sector bodies in Islington should ensure that all their directly employed staff and contractors are paid the London Living Wage.
- Tackling income inequality is crucial to forging a fairer Islington. Public sector bodies in Islington should ensure that the income differential between their lowest paid and highest paid staff is limited, eg to a maximum ratio of 1:12 in the case of Islington Council.

In its Final Report the Commission will make such recommendations not just for the Council and its public sector partners, but for all parts of Islington's community, and not just in the area of Work, but in all of the priority areas the Commission has identified as crucial to giving people a fair chance in life.

We are conscious also that there will be recommendations we would wish to make but which we know cannot be afforded because of the constraints of the financial situation the government has imposed. This makes our task of charting a course towards a fairer Islington even more difficult. But the consequence of inaction would be a borough further divided, which is not an eventuality we are prepared to entertain.

Conclusion

This Interim Report is a stock-take and a taster of what is to come at the Commission's half-way point. The sharp end of the Commission's work – its more detailed analysis leading to specific recommendations for action – will not be ready until it publishes its Final Report in June 2011. The issues of poverty and inequality which the Commission is grappling with are persistent problems that have afflicted Islington for generations: coming up with and working through genuinely radical and realistic solutions to them necessarily takes time. But that is the task in hand, and the Commission is on target.

February 2011

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Appendix 12 – Recommendations (collated)

Income

Recommendation 1: Wages

No-one in Islington should do a hard day's work for less than they can live on.

- Employers in Islington should pay all their directly employed staff at least the London Living Wage (currently £7.85/hr) and should review their procurement, contract and best value policies to ensure that, as far as possible within UK and EU law, the London Living Wage is the minimum paid to all their contracted staff as well (for a detailed, step-by-step guide to implementation, see Lewisham Council's document *Becoming a Living Wage Borough – a guide for local authorities*).

Recommendation 2: Pay differentials

Tackling income inequality is crucial to forging a fairer Islington.

- All major employers in the borough should publish their pay differentials to enable them to be scrutinised and challenged where appropriate. In the case of Islington Council, this scrutiny and challenge should mean establishing a formal sub-committee, including officer, member and union representation, to review pay differentials within the organisation.

Recommendation 3: Debt

Personal debt compounds poverty and inequality, and may worsen as people in Islington lose their jobs.

- Islington Council should explore the possibility of passing a by-law to prevent payday loan companies from opening in the borough and work with Islington Police and other enforcement agencies to take action against 'loan sharks'.

Work

Recommendation 4: Employment

Employment for Islington's residents is the best way to tackle poverty in the borough.

- Employers in Islington should, by means of positive action (such as advertising job opportunities in local media before national media) increase the proportion of local people they employ. In the case of Islington Council this should mean an increase in the proportion of Islington residents in its workforce from 23% to 30% by 2014.

Recommendation 5: Jobs for young people

No young person in Islington should be altogether out of education, employment and training.

- Employers in Islington should do more to support young people who are at risk of falling into the cycle of poverty, particularly by supporting the new initiatives being developed by Islington Business Board, including their 'Adopt a NEET' programme, which will support young people into employment or training.

Recommendation 6: Corporate social responsibility

We need Islington businesses to be on the side of fairness.

- Islington Business Board should develop a plan to promote the following important activities among businesses in the borough:
 - Pay at least the London Living Wage to all staff
 - Have a pay differential of less than 1:20
 - Ensure access for people with disabilities
 - Offer apprenticeships
 - Offer paid internships
 - Have employee representation on remuneration panels
 - Recognise trade unions
 - Offer family-friendly employment practices, eg flexible and part-time working and job-sharing opportunities

Families

Recommendation 7: The first year, and before

What happens during pregnancy and a child's first year is crucial to a child's life chances.

- There should be a major review of all public sector activity in Islington to support parents, and parents-to-be, from the point of a child's conception to its first birthday. In particular, this should look at significantly improving the coordination of services between GPs, Midwives, Health Visitors and the Council.

Recommendation 8: Early years

Investment in early years is vital to give every child the best start in life.

- To ensure that all children benefit from the developmental opportunities of early year provision, Islington should increase the take-up of free early years places by deprived families to 100% by 2014. To help reach this ambitious goal, a coalition of learning organisations including Islington Council, London Metropolitan University and City and Islington College should design a range of courses, including English as a Second Language courses, to suit the needs of parents whose children take up the 15 hours per week free childcare offer.

Recommendation 9: Affordable childcare

A lack of affordable childcare is a serious barrier to parents returning to work.

- Islington Council and its partners should establish a 'Childcare Coalition', involving schools, public sector organisations, the voluntary sector and employers to increase the amount of affordable childcare available in the borough, including, for example, by protecting the extended schools offer despite cuts to its funding. The 'Childcare Coalition' should also work to persuade employers to support parents in working flexibly around childcare provision.

Recommendation 10: Education

Besides employment, education is the best way to make Islington fair.

- Islington should reach and exceed national performance at ages 5, 11, 16 and 19 and narrow the gap in outcomes between pupils and students from different socioeconomic backgrounds by 2014 by ensuring that the Pupil Premium is used to maximum benefit for deprived children, including targeted help with reading; maintain access for all schoolchildren to breakfast, play, youth, homework, holiday and enriching after-school opportunities to support children's learning and development; and offer a guaranteed

progression route for Islington children who get the necessary grades from school to college to university in the borough.

Community

Recommendation 11: Volunteering

Volunteering time and money is a good way of challenging poverty and inequality in our borough.

- Islington Giving should be supported in its continuing efforts to recruit and deploy 500+ new volunteers in the borough by 2014; to tackle isolation, especially among older people and disabled people, by providing small grants, eg to allow people to join a gym or club; and to establish a major, new 'Good Neighbours' scheme to reduce isolation, particularly among older people, and build community spirit in the borough.
- Islington Council should attempt, with the Islington Volunteer Centre, to coordinate the volunteering time it affords its employees, in terms of how, where and when it is spent, so that such efforts are as useful as possible to Islington recipients in greatest need.

Recommendation 12: Public space

We need to reclaim communal spaces in Islington for community use.

- Islington Council and partners should identify all unused communal space in Islington, especially on estates, to free it up, make it accessible and use it, following the example of successful projects such as Edible Islington and the London Orchard Project.

Safety

Recommendation 13: Antisocial behaviour

Antisocial behaviour damages communities and contributes to social isolation.

- A single point of contact should be established for reporting antisocial behaviour, requiring collaboration between Housing Associations, Homes for Islington, Islington Police and the Council. This should enable a more effective and efficient approach to tackling antisocial behaviour, particularly on estates.

Recommendation 14: Fallout from crime

Tackling crime is about more than just dealing with its perpetrators.

- All agencies engaged in tackling offending behaviour should work closely together to ensure that the impact of that behaviour both on the victims of the crime and the familial networks of offenders is properly understood and mitigated where possible.

Housing

Recommendation 15: Under-occupation

Islington needs to tackle over-crowding by reducing under-occupancy through supporting down-sizing.

- Islington Council should make an even more attractive down-sizing offer to under-occupiers by exploring the potential for three-way swaps; holding local swap meetings; ensuring a move happens within a year; and getting people who have down-sized to speak to people who are eligible to do so about the benefits.

Recommendation 16: Empty property

In a borough with so much housing need, we cannot afford so much empty space.

- Islington Council should strive to bring empty space into residential use by:
 - Tackling empty space above shops through writing to all shop owners to discuss the opportunities and benefits and requiring relevant staff, eg Town Centre Managers, Environmental Health officers and Trading Standards officers, to enquire about space above shops as part of their routine.
 - Identifying empty space in commercial buildings for conversion for residential use, especially properties that have remained empty for some time and those that are in residential rather than commercial areas.

Health

Recommendation 17: Children's health

Good health in childhood is essential to a fairer Islington.

- NHS Islington and Islington Council should: support all schools in Islington to achieve 'enhanced healthy schools' status and all children's centres to achieve 'healthy children's centre' status; ensure every child has free vitamin drops up to the age of 5 years; undertake an inequalities analysis of immunisation uptake, to ensure that effort to support this programme is adequately targeted; seek to reduce the number (or at least check the further proliferation) of fast food outlets near schools.

Recommendation 18: Health inequalities

Proportionate universalism in health means an element of targeting.

- The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) produced by NHS Islington and Islington Council provides a strong evidence base for action to improve public health in the borough. A clear plan of action needs to be agreed across the public sector to address the main problems the JSNA highlights. This will allow targeted responses to populations in need, including preventive programmes tailored to the needs of deprived or excluded groups, such as people with learning difficulties or serious mental health problems, homeless people and older people, in response to their greater need.

Recommendation 19: Mental health

Times of economic hardship are stressful, so we must up support for mental health.

- NHS Islington needs to increase the number of people accessing support for depression and anxiety, particularly with levels of unemployment rising and increasing financial hardship which will increase mental ill-health in the borough, especially among the poorest.

Recommendation 20: Exercise

Islington's health would benefit if more people (from all backgrounds) cycled.

- Islington Council should negotiate with the Mayor of London and Transport for London to make it easier to cycle in Islington by getting the Barclays Bikes scheme extended further north into the borough and by getting the Freedom Pass to work on these Barclays Bikes.

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