



Islington Together For a more equal future

Strategic Plan 2021



ISLINGTON

 For a more equal future



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Foreword

Our mission for the next decade is to create a more equal Islington, where everyone who lives here has an equal chance to thrive.

Islington is a borough of great strengths: thriving businesses; excellent transport links; outstanding services; and most importantly, a rich and wonderful diversity of people, cultures and communities. But despite these strengths, too many of our people are in danger of being left behind. Poverty, mental ill-health and anxiety about the future, lack of access to good jobs, poor air quality and housing conditions, prejudice, racism and injustice. These factors hold too many people back, depriving them of opportunities and choices and the autonomy to shape their lives in the way they want.

Since our pioneering Fairness Commission in 2010, we have made great strides in establishing ourselves as the “Council of Fairness”, but global and national challenges – austerity, Brexit and more recently Covid 19 – have served to illuminate and exacerbate poverty and inequality across our borough. With budget cuts of over £250 million over the last decade, we have been restricted in the resources we have to support our most vulnerable residents and we know that the pandemic has left many teetering on the edge. However, it’s not just our most vulnerable residents that have been affected in the last year. The pandemic has resulted in large numbers of residents accessing council support for the first time and while we’ve done all we can to make this experience as easy as possible for them, the root causes of issues they face need to be tackled head on.

It is poverty and injustice that keeps children in overcrowded homes struggling to keep up with school work or play safely outside; that means parents working on zero hours contracts are unable to put food on the table; that trap women in financial dependence on abusive partners; that add to the social isolation of the elderly, who are even more cut off now as whole industries move online.

Just as the pandemic shone a light on the ways in which poverty blights lives, the brutal murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor reminded us that there are many dimensions to inequality; that alongside poverty, our structures and systems perpetuate racial discrimination, health inequalities and other injustices which often intersect with poverty to hold people back and prevent them from realising their potential.

Over the next decade we will maintain a relentless focus on tackling inequality and eradicating poverty in our borough.

These murders may have taken place across the Atlantic, but their impact rippled across the globe not because they were a shocking exception, but because they resonated and reawakened an anger in this country where we have experienced similar racial hatred and injustice for far too long. We remember Cherry Groce, Stephen Lawrence and more recently Dalian Atkinson, amongst many others.

We are determined to confront these issues head on. Now, as we emerge from the pandemic, is the time to reimagine our future with a new Leader for our Council and a new strategy for driving change. Over the next decade we will maintain a relentless focus on tackling inequality and eradicating poverty in our borough. This document sets out the approach we will take: starting with our communities, listening to and understanding their diverse experiences and what they want for their lives; co-designing services that reflect their ambitions, that work proactively to build resilience, support emotional wellbeing and create routes into good jobs; ensuring good quality homes in neighbourhoods that are safe and supportive; tackling climate change and improving air quality; supporting our local businesses to thrive; and above all focusing on achieving impact and tangible change. It is an ambitious strategic framework for changing the way we operate as a council and as a borough in order to create a level playing field where everyone has an equal chance to thrive.

We cannot achieve our ambitions alone: we need to work alongside our colleagues, partners and community to realise our shared goals. We have established the Fairer Together Borough Partnership as a vehicle for us all to come together to drive this change. We look forward to working with our community over the next decade to challenge inequality and create a more equal future for everyone in Islington.



Councillor
Kaya Comer Schwartz
Leader of Islington Council



Linzi Roberts-Egan
Chief Executive of
Islington Council

Introduction

This document sets out the strategic framework that will drive our work as a Council and with our partners over the coming years.

As well as outlining our **priorities** – what we want to achieve for all our residents – it also describes the **principles** that will guide our approach to achieving change. We know from our own experience and from the evidence that the “how” is just as important as the “what”. We also set out the **key transformation programmes** which we are setting in motion to put these principles into practice, reimagining the way we work and the way we use our resources as a Council. Underpinning all of this are the **values** which will shape our behaviour, individually and collectively, and the way we relate to our colleagues, partners, and above all, our residents.

This document does not seek to dictate every step that we should take over the coming years; rather, it should be seen as a compass to guide us towards the ultimate destination of a fairer, more equal future for everyone in Islington. The pace of change has been so rapid in recent years that an agile approach will be required: we will use this document to shape more detailed plans that will need to evolve based on our own learning as well as external pressures that we won't always be able to foresee. But if we stick to our principles and use this strategic framework to maintain an unrelenting focus on our goal, we know we will achieve our shared ambitions.

To illustrate and bring to life the commitment we are making here, this document also includes individual stories which demonstrate the way this is already shaping the way we work to improve outcomes and experiences for people across our borough.

A more equal Islington

Priorities

Children and young people have the best start

Local jobs and businesses in a thriving local economy

Everyone has a place to call home

Cleaner, greener, healthier borough

Communities feel safe, connected and inclusive

Principles

We stand up to and challenge inequality

We work in partnership

We are committed to early intervention

We embrace change

We are driven by delivering impact

Programmes

Challenging Inequality

Fairer Together

Community Wealth Building

Homes and Neighbourhoods

Cleaner, greener, healthier Islington

Team Islington

Behaviours

Be...

Collaborative

Ambitious

Resourceful

Empowering



Early intervention and action can make a big difference to people's lives and wellbeing, especially for our young people. If we can identify a problem early enough we can provide all of the specific support services that are needed to help give everyone the opportunities to start well.



Jade and Cassie-Rose's story

“It’s been a long 18 months but we’re in such a better place now. This time last year we were isolating, in lockdown, and we were worried about the lack of development with my daughter’s speech. She wasn’t really developing new words as you’d expect.

When our Health Visitor came for a check-up we discussed Bright Start and some of the support that they offer. We went to a couple of online events and, coming out of lockdown, I really wanted to get Cassie-Rose interacting with other children and explore all the different stuff on offer around here.

Bright Start has been a great experience for us and their timetable is brilliant! We’ve been discovering parks, play groups, music, dancing, singing, messy play, educational toys, so many things!

They also put us in contact with Chatterpillars who have helped us along my daughter’s speech and language journey.

What helps is that the staff are so interested in your child and give great advice. They offer loads of tips and advice on behaviours, how to understand what your child is experiencing, what to do and where to go for help. It’s stuff that I put into supporting and understanding my daughter every day, adapting my parenting skills and it’s been a very positive experience.

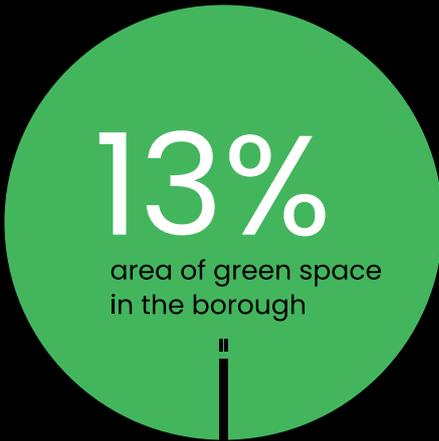
Cassie-Rose has thrived in the groups, she’s more confident and her speech is improving. She’s recognising lots of other things that she wasn’t before.

Since I’ve started going to the Bright Start groups I feel reassured and more confident in my child’s development, it’s great to have such a supportive network and community around us.

I’m so grateful for the help and support Bright Start and Chatterpillars have given us, they’ve really made a difference to our lives. //

242,827

population
of Islington



3%

est. growth of
population between
2020 & 2030

28%

the highest level of
child poverty in London



1 in 6

adults living with a diagnosed
mental health condition

About our borough



Islington is a proudly diverse borough, home to people from all faiths, nationalities and backgrounds.

It's a borough where people like to live; in our last resident's survey 91% residents said they enjoyed living in Islington and 92% said it's a place where people from different backgrounds get along well together.

But Islington is also borough of contrasts. It's a place where the gap between the "haves" and "have nots" is stark, where too many children and older people in particular are living in poverty. A decade of austerity, political uncertainty and welfare reform have made life even more challenging for some of the most vulnerable people in our community and that's why we won't rest in our determination to make Islington fairer.

- The **population of Islington is estimated to be 242,827 in 2020**. This is an increase of approximately 18% (36,000 people) since 2011.
- It is estimated that the population of Islington will grow by 3% (7,000 people) between 2020 and 2030.
- Islington is the **most densely populated local authority area in England and Wales**, with 16,097 people per square km. This is almost triple the London average and more than 37 times the national average.
- The council is a landlord and freeholder to over 34,000 homes.
- Islington has the **highest level of child poverty in London (28%) and ranks 4th highest in London for poverty among older people**.
- Even before the pandemic, Islington ranked the 5th highest in London for loneliness and **1 in 6 adults were living with a diagnosed mental health condition**.
- Only 13% of the borough's land is green space: this is the second lowest proportion of any local authority in the country and far lower than outer London boroughs such as Barking and Dagenham where approximately a third of the borough is green space.

Our priorities

Our purpose is to achieve change for our residents who are at the heart of everything we do. Listening to our communities, understanding their experiences and aligning our priorities with theirs is the only way to ensure that the changes we make, and the partnerships we form, are all contributing to improving the lives of our residents. Our priorities reflect what we know the people of Islington want for themselves and their neighbours and will sit at the heart of our plan to build a more equal future for everyone.

a more eq

We invest in local jobs and businesses to ensure a thriving local economy

The rise of the gig economy and in-work poverty has meant that employment is not always a straightforward solution to tackling poverty, and so we must address precarious employment and ensure equal access to well-paid jobs with prospects. This has been exacerbated by the pandemic, with the night-time economy and sectors such as leisure and hospitality hit hardest in the borough, which means creating local opportunities is more important than ever.

We work together to create a cleaner, greener, healthier borough

The climate emergency and health inequalities are the two greatest threats to the wellbeing of our population. We believe they are intrinsically linked. The climate emergency threatens to exacerbate even further the extreme health inequalities exposed by Covid 19. But addressing the climate emergency also provides answers to addressing health inequalities - mental and physical health, plus life expectancy. The value of parks, green spaces and the natural environment, change in pace, working routines, the 15 minute city, active travel such as walking and cycling: we are determined to seize these opportunities to create a sustainable future where people can live independent and healthy lives, while enjoying clean air and people-friendly streets.



We stand with our communities so they are safe, connected and inclusive

The experience of the last year has shown us the great power of communities in coming together to look out for each other. With more of us spending time in local areas due to widespread home working and travel restrictions, there is a real opportunity to build on the connections fostered over the last year to boost community cohesion and resilience for years to come. We know that building relationships can be life changing for the most vulnerable – for the young person at risk of exploitation or for the isolated elderly person – and that the best solutions are found when local people come together to develop them. We want Islington to be a place made up of strong communities, where regardless of background, people feel safe, connected and have the resources they need to make change in their local areas.

Equal future

We nurture our children and young people in Islington so everyone has the very best start

Young people in Islington as a group are more likely to live in deprivation than the rest of the population. We know that early life experiences have a significant effect on future life chances and we also know from studies that interventions have the greatest effect in the early years. We will work with schools and other partners to ensure that every young person in Islington has access to the opportunities they need to thrive in life, including an excellent education. We will be relentless in our goal to become an exclusion-free borough and eliminate disparities in educational achievement.

We make sure everyone has a place to call home, which is secure, decent and genuinely affordable

On average in Islington, rent accounts for about 70% of gross earnings. We are in the midst of a severe housing crisis and the need to secure genuinely affordable homes for our residents has never been greater. We believe that nobody should ever be without a decent roof over their heads and we will also work to eliminate rough sleeping and support people experiencing homelessness. We want to make sure that we use our power and influence in other areas to also stand up for private renters and all others in our communities to ensure equity in access to decent, safe and affordable homes.



Helping our local businesses get through the pandemic so that they can help to provide good jobs for local people and help shape our future economy has been a priority for the council.

ARK's story



As well as continuing to oblige developers to provide more affordable workspaces in new developments we have also focused thousands of pounds of grant money where it was most needed.

Earlier this year, Islington Council introduced the Workspace Operator Recovery Grant Scheme (WORGs), which gave grants of up to £25,000 to 12 affordable workspace operators across the borough.

Social enterprise ARK has received one of the grants. Based in Kings Cross, ARK run an affordable workspace for creatives and start-ups who think community is just as important as productivity. Gavin Turnbull and Nick Johnson from ARK explain how they got involved with the ARK scheme and how it has helped them.

“We have had a longstanding relationship with Islington Council, particularly the Affordable Workspace team who have offered us support, resources and advice...

... We are currently in a fundraising drive to enable us to deliver a new workspace in Finsbury Park.

We've started renovating a dilapidated 200sqm hall, that will become home and a new affordable workspace for local artists, makers and freelance/remote workers. The grant has allowed us to make the building structurally sound and safe, to begin internal restoration works. As the space develops there will also be café, gardens and exhibition space for the local community to enjoy too. //”

Our principles

Our goals are ambitious and to achieve them we will need to draw on our experience as well as the evidence base about what works. We know from talking to our residents that “the how” is just as important as “the what” and so we have identified some fundamental principles to shape our approach.

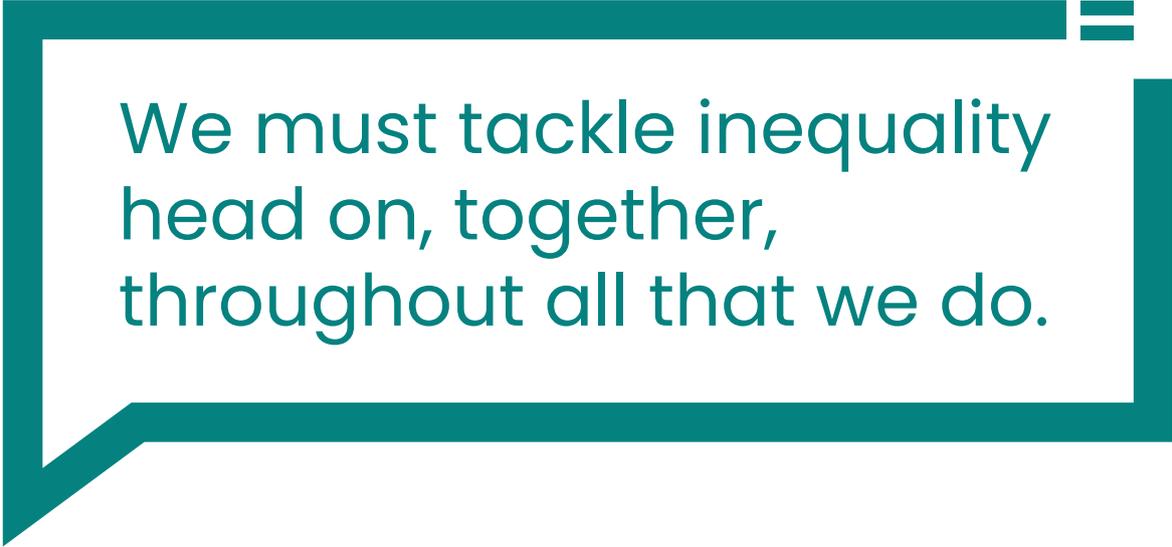
In Islington...

We stand up to and challenge inequality

We must focus on challenging inequality so that no one is left behind; so that all our residents are able to access opportunity and are empowered to achieve their goals. Structural inequalities continue to hold too many people in society back from reaching their full potential and we cannot realise our vision of a fairer borough if we do not tackle inequality head on, together, throughout all that we do. Everyone in Islington must play their part to challenge the status quo and call out discrimination and injustice, however uncomfortable it may feel.

We work in partnership with our communities

If we are to challenge inequality we need to know and understand our residents, their lived experience, their thoughts, views and ideas for change. We need to work with our communities and local VCS as equal partners, building on their knowledge and connections as co-deliverers of sustainable change. This shift towards a “community paradigm” where service users are seen as creative collaborators to solve complex problems rather than as customers or passive citizens is one we will continue to champion into the future.



We must tackle inequality head on, together, throughout all that we do.

We are committed to early intervention and prevention

The evidence is clear that early intervention and prevention is the most effective way to improve outcomes for people at all ages. We must work with people and communities proactively, to uncover the story of their lives and wrap our services around them to help them achieve their goals. In doing so we will prioritise relationships and connections over processes and systems. We cannot underestimate the power of making connections, both between residents and their communities, and between services to make sure that the resident experience is seamless.

We embrace change and innovation

As we look to the future beyond the pandemic, we cannot go back to old ways of working, but must embrace the opportunities that increased use of digital and flexible working have brought us. We must go further and develop our ability to collaborate, test new ideas and take risks, both as an organisation and as individuals. The last year has shown us that radical shifts in behaviour at work and in the community are possible and we must exploit this as an opportunity to drive Islington forwards. We will do this by using cutting edge technology and developing our collective appetite for innovation.

We are driven by delivering impact for residents

Above all, our fundamental focus should always be on improving outcomes for our residents and this should shape the way we approach all aspects of our work. We need to make better use of data coupled with effective engagement and participation to understand the problems we are trying to solve and should also be able to demonstrate the impact our services have had on improving the lives of our residents. We will adopt agile principles to shift mind sets towards action, observing impact and results, over lengthy business cases.



Strategic programmes

To achieve our priorities and put our principles into practice, we have designed a series of strategic and transformative programmes.

These programmes do not cover all of the different services we deliver. They are focused on those areas of our business where we need to see change in order to deliver the priorities we have set for ourselves. As we look to rebuild our borough following the pandemic, these programmes provide the opportunity to reimagine the borough we wish to live in and work together to pave the way for a fairer future for everyone who lives here. Successful delivery will require fundamental changes to the way we work internally as well as the way we work together with communities, partners and residents. We all need to play our part.

There is a lot to do, but by focusing our energy and resources on our key priorities and using our principles to guide our work we are confident we will deliver. Over the coming years we will measure our impact in each of these strategic programmes and in doing so, we will flex our resources and adapt accordingly.

Challenging Inequality

The ambition

Spring 2020 brought about unprecedented change across the globe, and like many others, we moved rapidly into crisis mode to support our most vulnerable residents.

As we responded to immediate need by distributing food parcels and laptops and supporting hospital discharges to free up bed spaces for the rapidly increasing need, we were not only confronted with overwhelming levels of financial and emotional hardship, but with the ugly realities of structural racism and injustice which exacerbated impacts for people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. The spotlight on these structural inequalities was brought into sharp focus when later in the year, the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor sparked waves of Black Lives Matter protests which firmly placed dismantling structural inequalities on the international agenda.

The Challenging Inequality Programme has been designed to address these issues, breaking down barriers and redesigning systems and structures so that everyone, regardless of background, has the opportunity to fulfil their potential and lead a good quality of life in Islington. We recognise that there are many dimensions to inequality; that alongside poverty, our structures and systems perpetuate racial and other injustices which often intersect with each other to hold people back and prevent them from realising their potential. We will take an intersectional approach, broadening the scope of the programme to consider these other dimensions, and how we can address the multiple barriers people face to create a more equal Islington for all.

We will work with our community to understand lived experiences and intervene to remove the barriers that too many residents face.

The key components

Designed in collaboration with our staff and community and developed from extensive internal and external research, the programme sets out our approach to tackling inequality through the different levers we have as a local authority across three workstreams:

1 Islington as a Service Provider and Commissioner – our biggest priority is to challenge inequality to improve the lives of our residents. Across housing, social care, employment and numerous other services, we will work with communities to understand lived experiences and intervene to remove the barriers that too many residents face which are causing unacceptable and stark inequalities in living and working conditions. Through our capacity as a service provider and commissioner of services we are working with communities to take decisive action to tackle some of the wicked issues – inequalities in educational attainment and violent crime – and redesign the public realm to promote equality through accessible, people friendly streets.

2 Islington as an Employer – as a large employer and decision maker in the borough with approx. 6,000 staff, we have a responsibility to root out racism and inequality internally. By removing barriers, developing cultural competency as an organisation and supporting the development of staff from underrepresented ethnic and other backgrounds, we know we will have a far more vibrant and richer workplace where everyone can thrive, and as a result we will better serve the needs of our residents.

3 Islington as a Strategic Leader – our role as a leader in the local area requires us to use our influence and position to set an example and work with the community and partners to drive change together. It is only by working together can we achieve the scale of change needed to break down the systems and barriers that hold people back. We are radically shifting the language we use, the data we collect and the ways we pool our collective resources to improve inclusivity and equity of access to services and opportunities in Islington. This is not easy work but we are prepared to have the difficult conversations that are necessary to create meaningful solutions together.



We are committed to challenging inequality in all its forms. We recognise that to effect change, we will need to work together with partners and communities to break down barriers and reshape the unfair systems that hold people back.

Husen's story



Husen, Young Mayor of Islington, was involved in trying to create new opportunities for the Somali community by bringing young people together with the Police and having honest conversations about key issues affecting the community.

“When I was elected Youth Mayor last year, I really wanted to do something about knife crime and the impact that violence has on young peoples’ lives.

When we lost two young Somali people last year I wanted to do something with the local community to try to build some trust after the stabbings. The whole situation was sad and frustrating but you have to keep talking.

So first we organised a Somali Community event bringing together Somali young people with Islington Council and the Police. It was a chance for everyone to be heard and to try to work out ways to improve things.

Young people were saying they needed more opportunities so we organised a Somali Youth Employment and Opportunities event. People wanted to know how to get jobs, write CVs and that’s what we found out about there.

We also now have the Young Islington Youth Forum every month where young people can come together and talk to council leaders. We talk about different things, like education and employment, emotional health, safety and other important issues to young people. At the next meeting we will be meeting one of the Superintendents of our local police force to give us a chance to ask questions.

I regularly go to youth clubs, letting young people know about all the help that is available out there and post on Instagram. I can reach young people in a different way to the council but we all want them to get the help they need when they need it.

The youth offer, like Summersiversity, gives them something different to do rather than hang around on the street, and the youth workers can be really helpful. //

Fairer Together

The ambition

We want Islington to be a place where everyone – whatever their background – has a decent chance for a long and healthy life, lived on their own terms.

However, a decade of austerity, rising living and housing costs and demographic changes means that not only do too many residents live in poverty or require social care support, but our capacity to provide services is drastically different to what it once was.

Fairer Together is a way of working. It's about working together to tackle inequality and change lives through a high quality, integrated all age early intervention and prevention offer. It's an approach that starts with the individual, uncovers the story of their lives in all its dimensions, supports people to define their own meaningful, personal goals and aspirations and wraps our services around them, building strong communities so that everyone can benefit from the full power of all that Islington offers.

Fairer Together is about working together to tackle inequality and change lives through a high quality, integrated all-age early intervention and prevention offer.

The key components

We have established the Fairer Together Partnership to drive forward this change, pooling our collective resources across different organisations and partners in Islington – health services, education, criminal justice and emergency services, voluntary and community sector organisations – so that together we become more than the sum of our parts.

- 1 Strengthening Partnership** – our partnership is built around a shared commitment to ensure **everyone in Islington able to Start, Live and Age Well**. We aim to bring partners together to frame new strategic investment plans with shared outcomes and priorities so that we can use our collective resources to change systems, change services and change lives.
- 2 All Age Early Intervention** – we have a really good track record with our Bright Start offer which supports early intervention in the early years; however, through Fairer Together we want to deliver an all-age early intervention and prevention service that supports people when they are vulnerable from cradle to grave. We are committing to taking a strengths based approach, which means that we will always support individuals to identify what they *can* do – not what they *can't* do – and work alongside them to expand on their strengths to build their independence and resilience.
- 3 Resident Experience** – everyone who interacts with the Council deserves to have a seamless and meaningful experience, from paying a council tax bill to accessing adult social care. Ensuring that residents can access what they need in a way that works for them is good for them and good for us. In order to preserve resources to be able to deliver the tailored offer for those who need it the most, we must embrace innovation and enhance our digital offer so that the those who prefer to and are able to, can self-serve.
- 4 Challenging Inequality** – running as a constant thread through all of the work we do in Fairer Together we will drive the commitment to challenge inequality across the partnership, looking at ways in which we can work together to effect change. For example, by supporting people who typically do not engage with mental health services to access the help they need by working towards becoming an exclusion free borough where there is equality of educational attainment for all young people.

Community Wealth Building

The ambition

Islington is a place of opportunity. It's a destination of choice for new start-ups and creatives and we are known for our bustling high streets, many business headquarters and cultural gems. However, the longer term impact of austerity and Brexit combined with the effects of multiple lockdowns during the pandemic have hit many sectors of our local economy hard, reducing access to opportunity, and increasing deprivation and inequalities.

Essential to our vision of a fairer future for everyone in Islington is an inclusive local economy, where everyone has access to well-paid, secure jobs, as well as the skills and connections they need to continue to thrive throughout their careers. We will work with local businesses, developers, and our suppliers to invest in the local area and make sure that local people are first in line for jobs and opportunities.

The key components

Working collaboratively with our partners and businesses, we will focus on maximising opportunities for residents and businesses by:

-  **Supporting people into sustainable work** – far too many of our residents are in long term poverty or have been plunged into poverty over the last year. We will work with partners, communities and employers to help residents facing barriers to employment to gain the access, skills and confidence they need to secure good quality, sustainable jobs and create routes out of poverty. We know that for many people, finding a job is not always a quick fix to the challenges they face and so to complement this, we will help residents to maximise income, entitlements and manage debt.
-  **Building an inclusive, local economy** – responding to the devastating impacts on our local businesses during the pandemic, we are focusing on strengthening our high streets and town centres, creating affordable workspaces to support entrepreneurs, and encouraging residents to spend locally to rebuild and facilitate a thriving, green and inclusive economy. We know that the smaller businesses that have suffered the most are disproportionately owned by women and people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds and so we will target support and make sure anyone who wants to can set up, grow and thrive.
-  **Using our spending power** – every year we procure numerous services and we know we could be doing more to deliver maximum benefits for Islington residents and local businesses through these processes. We will have a relentless focus on delivering social value such as by creating new apprenticeships and jobs, putting local suppliers first through our purchasing activity, and requiring all suppliers to pay their staff at least the London Living Wage, as well as offsetting carbon emissions and promoting environmental sustainability.
-  **Making best use of our spaces** – as a local authority we have a number of properties and assets that we could be using in ways that offer greater benefit for the communities that surround them. We want to make sure that all our major capital projects and existing community centres and spaces contribute towards our ambition of an inclusive economy where everyone has access to opportunities and the resources they need to make a decent living and thrive. This could be by offering up flexible working spaces, incubation space for start-ups or co-locating services that support the financial wellbeing of our residents alongside existing support services.
-  **Working with key local partners** – we do not exist in a vacuum and, in order to support the development of a thriving and truly inclusive local economy, we will need to work collaboratively. Community Wealth Building is about harnessing the Council's significant influence as a large employer, purchaser and owner of assets; but we can go even further if we work in partnership with other key local organisations in areas such as education, health and housing as well as larger local business, with similar influence. These 'anchor institutions' are locally rooted organisations that are here to stay. They employ people, wield purchasing power, and own or manage buildings and land. If we work together to use our collective power, we can make a significant, positive difference to local communities.

Homes and Neighbourhoods

The ambition

With a growing population and the price of housing continuing to far outweigh wages in London, ensuring access to good quality housing that is safe and genuinely affordable for everyone in Islington is an essential priority for us in creating a fairer future for our borough.

The shortage of affordable housing continues to be a real concern for Islington residents. We know that this means far too many residents fall victim to rogue landlords and far too many young people being brought up in the borough are facing the reality of being unable to afford to continue to live in the communities into which they were born.

We have already delivered over 800 new genuinely affordable homes for local people in the last few years and have built the largest number of council homes in Islington for 30 years. However, we know that a radical shift is needed to really effect change and create strong communities where people feel safe and a sense of belonging. We also know that accessing housing is not the end point, but that we must also ensure that once housed, people are supported to stay well in good quality housing, in neighbourhoods where people look out for each other and can all participate to make decisions about things that affect them.

We will turbo charge the building of new genuinely affordable homes.

What are the core components?

To deliver on these ambitions, we will:

- 1 Increase the supply of genuinely affordable homes** – we will turbocharge the building of new genuinely affordable homes in the borough, including 550 new council homes for social rent, and will make sure that local people are always first in line for new homes.
- 2 Provide safe, comfortable homes and estates** – we are a landlord and freeholder to over 34,000 homes. We will invest in our estates and buildings to ensure we are providing the highest standards of safety and comfort for our current and future residents, as well as supporting consistently good quality conditions by providing an in-house responsive repairs and estate cleaning service to our tenants and good value home ownership services to our leaseholders.
- 3 Support residents to live well and have a say** – our ambition is to build strong, meaningful and person-centred relationships with our residents, where staff are empowered to intervene early by working with the individual to build on their strengths and live independently. We will work in partnership with communities and our VCS partners to work towards creating inclusive and resilient communities where people have a sense of belonging, participate in the local community and work with us to develop solutions to community issues.
- 4 Prevent homelessness and support rough sleepers** – Islington has seen a consistent reduction in homelessness acceptances over the last five years; however, we believe that in 2021, one person without a permanent home is one too many. We will continue to take a preventative and collaborative approach to dealing with homelessness and work towards eliminating rough sleeping entirely from Islington's streets, building on the learning and strides made during the pandemic. We will work with people who have complex needs to ensure we break the cycle of rough sleeping and tackle the root cause in a way that works for the individual.
- 5 Stand up for private renters** – we want to see a private sector that ensures safe and dignified living conditions for all by operating good standards of management and providing good quality, affordable accommodation. We will monitor standards and take action against rogue landlords and letting agents and any poorly performing housing associations and where appropriate, will work with the police to address criminal behaviour by landlords to stamp out exploitative behaviour, inequalities and protect the rights of our residents.



The reality of the situation is that if you haven't got a decent home it can be difficult to sort your life out, and many homeless people have additional problems to deal with too. During the pandemic we had a chance to move some of most vulnerable residents off streets – wrapping support around the person until they had a new home.

Zoriick's story

“Unless you’ve been through homelessness you don’t really realise how hard it is. These were tough times, everything was hard.

I’ve lived in various places but in 2019 found myself homeless, living rough in a little shed with mould on the walls in Islington.

I was visited by an Islington Outreach worker who saw the terrible conditions I was living in and got me a place in Holloway winter shelter, with my partner Stella. From there we were moved into temporary emergency housing in Caledonian Road.

Throughout the last couple of years Islington Outreach Team have been brilliant. They spoke to Housing for us, explaining our personal histories, illnesses, mental health issues and our housing history and this helped us get offered a council flat.

Everything we’ve needed, they’ve been there for us, from helping sort our Housing Benefit to getting Direct Debits set-up. They put us in touch with Bright Sparks for furniture, a fridge and oven. Without them we’d be completely stuck.

When we were offered this place we loved it, we’re so happy, we moved in a couple of months ago.

I’d really like to thanks the council for this lovely place, after being homeless for so long, rough sleeping, it’s really changed my life, so thank you very much. //

Cleaner, Greener, Healthier Islington

The ambition

We owe it to ourselves and future generations to look after and protect our planet and we are rapidly running out of time to get this right.

In June 2019, the Council declared a climate emergency and we committed to working towards a target of net zero carbon by 2030. It is an ambitious goal, but there is tremendous energy and passion in communities and so if we work side by side, we know we will succeed.

It is true that a lot of the change needs to come at the national level, and so we will continue to lead the way in lobbying for legislative and regulatory changes to give local areas more powers to tackle climate related issues and encourage government investment in green initiatives. Nevertheless, there is significant work to do on the local level and we are committed to rolling our sleeves up and working with communities to radically reshape systems and infrastructure and critically, behaviour, so that we can all start to make greener choices in the way we travel, live and work. We believe that in doing so, not only will be able to contribute to global climate targets, but by adapting the way we use public spaces and by embracing sustainable travel, we will improve the health, wellbeing, and opportunities for our communities.

By tackling climate change, we will improve the health, wellbeing and opportunities for our community.

The key components

There are four dimensions to this programme of work:

- 1 Transport** – air pollution in our borough has reached dangerous levels and there are stark inequalities in the impact on the health of our residents. We have to take decisive action on reducing emissions in the borough from transport by transforming our streets to be more people-friendly as well as securing cleaner and more accessible public transport services for Islington so our residents can live healthy, independent lives.
- 2 The green economy** – we will exploit this opportunity of investment in delivering on our net zero carbon target to grow the local economy in ways that supports sustainable goals. We will work closely with the almost 19,000 businesses in the borough which already support a more sustainable future while also working with our supply chain and partners to upskill people and capitalise on the opportunity to create jobs for our residents in a greener economy.
- 3 Buildings and infrastructure** – our housing and commercial buildings stock is a significant contributor to carbon emissions and so we will retrofit existing buildings, ensure new developments meet the highest standards possible and scrutinise planning and development policies. Similarly, we will replace our waste collection vehicle fleet with fully electric vehicles. There are financial and health benefits to these actions for our residents, as a significant proportion of our older residents live in fuel poverty and so we will target our efforts to ensure maximum impacts for local people.
- 4 The natural environment and waste** – we will support residents and businesses to make better use of resources, reduce waste and improve recycling rates. While in Islington we do not have as much access to green space as some other London boroughs enjoy, we will create opportunities to innovatively repurpose space and increase greening, as well as stay protective of what we have, managing it well for the enjoyment and wellbeing of residents, as well as doing our bit in protecting vital biodiversity.

Team Islington

The ambition

Underpinning all of these ambitious, strategic programmes must be a fundamental reimagining of the way we think and work as an organisation.

To succeed in all of our priority areas and achieve our ambition of a fairer future for everyone in the face of such massive challenges, we must pull together and work as a solid team across every service area and at every level in the Council. The world of work is changing: in Islington we will embrace this change, working collaboratively with our staff to shape the future of work in our borough.

It is clear that if we do not adapt to be more collaborative, creative and evidence led in our decision making, we will not be able to grapple with the complexities of the challenges we face and do right by our residents. Transformational change can only be driven by an organisation that embraces innovation at every level, is equipped with robust data to measure impact, nurtures talent and responds to the needs of its workforce, empowers individuals to take ownership of work, and has effective decision-making mechanisms.

People are our greatest assets:
we must harness creativity and
spot untapped potential.

The key components

There are a number of workstreams within this programme which will strengthen Team Islington as a modern and progressive council:

- 1 Nurture our people** – we believe our people are our greatest assets and we must harness the creativity and spot untapped potential in our staff and residents so that people can fulfil their potential, which ultimately improves what we are able to deliver for residents. We will do this by creating a culture of learning and supporting all staff to develop well-rounded skill sets and progress in careers in ways which are meaningful to the individual, paying particular attention to underrepresented groups at senior levels and stamping out structural racism and injustice.
- 2 Redesign the way we work** – thousands of staff rapidly pivoted to full time working from home almost overnight in March 2020. There is a real opportunity now to build on this and integrate new structures, systems and technologies that support everyone to deliver their best work in ways that work for the individual. Key to this will be ensuring accessibility and inclusivity in the way we work and resources people have access to, recognising that there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach, but that with good leadership and making best use of technology, we can be flexible to the needs of the individual to get work done.
- 3 Review our functions and structure** – we are examining our critical back office functions such as business support, policy, finance and human resources which are the backbone of any organisation to be able to deliver on their mission. By critically reviewing our internal mechanisms we will be able to build a more resilient and responsive organisation that is equipped to deal with any challenge.
- 4 Enhance our data and systems** – to support our people to thrive and deliver, we need to equip them with the right tools. Through this workstream we will radically transform the way we collect, store and use data, as well as grabbing opportunities to introduce new, cutting edge technology and digital tools. We will also reshape the way our staff can access information, policies and other resources that are necessary in the day to day which we recognise is an important part of working life.



Changing behaviours

To deliver on these ambitions requires an individual and collective commitment from all our staff, partners and residents.

We have set out our priorities, principles and strategic programmes but the last vital component is the behaviours that we must all adopt in order to drive change. We have launched with our staff a set of core behaviours that will inform how we approach all of our work, which we have called the CARE values and represent what it means to “Be Islington”. These values apply to us all; whether as a director, a manager, a frontline employee or a member of staff in an essential enabling service. These behaviours reflect what we think public service is all about: being collaborative in our approach and working together; empowering the people we work with as well as the residents we serve; being resourceful and creative to make things happen; and being ambitious to really raise the bar in terms of what we can achieve.

 **be Collaborative**

 **be Ambitious**

 **be Resourceful**

 **be Empowering**

Looking ahead



We will stand with our communities in Islington, determined to ensure that everyone – regardless of background – is able to have a good quality of life. We know that our relentless focus on creating a more equal borough and our tenacity to tackle the most complex challenges in partnership with our communities will mean we will make this a reality.

This plan is just a starting point, and over the next year we will be speaking to and working with residents to uncover how the issues outlined here such as low pay, insecure work, social isolation and crowded housing really impact daily life in Islington. With this document as our guide, we will be informed by the lived experiences of our residents and their hopes and dreams to flesh out our approaches in our key strategic programmes and design new interventions where necessary.

The priorities we have set out here will guide us in all our work over the next decade, but we will review this document at regular intervals as we learn more about the challenges that our residents face. We will assess progress regularly as the landscape evolves in the borough and we inevitably come up against new challenges. We will use this plan to:

- Anchor our efforts and shape the development of more detailed plans which we will continue to refresh with our partners and communities based on learning, experience and feedback.
- Inform clear communications and engagement opportunities with local people and communities to bring people on board with our vision and approach so we can work together to achieve common goals.
- Communicate with colleagues and partners to establish collective ambitions and actions to underpin delivery of key strategic programmes.
- Shape the way we measure our impact as an organisation, ensuring we are using data and insight effectively to track our progress across strategic programmes, not only so we know we are making a difference, but so that we can communicate our achievements and learning to those around us.

It is essential that community voice and expertise is reflected in our plans for the future. If you have any ideas or would like to get involved in any way, please contact equalities@islington.gov.uk.

Our goals are ambitious but we will know we are going in the right direction when we start to see:

- a reduction in poverty
- improvements in the mental wellbeing of our communities
- a narrowing of the gap in terms of educational attainment
- improvement in the access to opportunities for our young people.

Above all, we will know we are succeeding when residents tell us that they experience outstanding service and see positive impacts on their lives.

This is Islington, and together, we will build a more equal future for everyone who lives here.



Islington Together

For a more equal future

For more information
please contact
equalities@islington.gov.uk



ISLINGTON

 For a more equal future