

## **Drovers Centre Consultation July 2019**

### **1. Background Information**

Islington Council is committed to supporting local residents to live full and active lives in the community. We know how important it is for older people to be able to get out and access activities and events that are enjoyable, sociable, interesting and keep people physically and mentally well, and to develop and maintain valued relationships with other people.

Islington has an extensive range of community centres and facilities. There are over 70 community centres in the borough, with over 50 of these being owned by the council. The council, housing associations and our voluntary and community sector partners have recently invested in building new state of the art community facilities across the borough, including the Goodinge, Brickworks, and Vibast Community Centres, with others including the new Highbury Roundhouse at Ronald's Road to be ready soon. These facilities are something that we are proud of, and will enable us to provide opportunities for residents to connect and thrive.

At the same time, due to severe cuts in funding from central government, Islington Council continues to face financial pressures and has to make difficult choices to protect vital services. The Council has already made savings of £225m since 2010, and is required to save another £50m over the next three years.

#### **The Drovers Centre building and current services**

The Drovers Centre building no longer provides the high quality and comfortable environment we want for our residents. Repairing the building and the ongoing costs of maintenance are putting additional extra pressure on our already stretched budgets. It is estimated that the building requires around £170,000 of significant repairs, in addition to annual maintenance costs of around £3,000. An independent Building Condition Survey found that repairs and replacements would be needed for areas such as windows and roof-lights, doors, floor coverings, external paving and leaking pipes. A complete overhaul of the heating system is also needed.

Unfortunately, without additional external funding, the council is not able to afford this without making cuts to other services.

Islington Council currently pays Age UK Islington (AUKI) to run the Drovers Centre services. Due to ongoing pressures on our budgets, it has not been possible to increase this funding to the level needed to maintain existing services. We have looked closely at whether we could continue to run the service with the current funding, but both Islington Council and AUKI feel this is no longer possible.

AUKI remains committed to reducing social isolation and loneliness, and want to target their resources to bring the most benefit to the largest number of people. Over recent years, AUKI

has worked hard in partnership with the Council and local residents to transform Drovers into a place for socialising and developing interests, as part of the AUKI network of social activities for older people within the borough.

Despite the success of this work, the amount needed to keep on top of the maintenance and upkeep of an ageing building, and all with lower than needed funding, has meant that AUKI has had to look hard at how the charity makes best use of its resources. As a result, AUKI has decided they can have a greater impact by ceasing to provide services at Drovers from the end of January 2020 and, instead, tackle isolation in different ways.

Going forward, AUKI wants to give more of a focus on one to one support for people who would otherwise not be able attend community activities. Whilst there are lots of activities and social groups across the borough, including the AUKI social Get Togethers, in venues such as cafes, museums and leisure centres, AUKI has recognised that there is also a need for more of this intensive one to one support for people who would not otherwise be able to get out at all.

The Council also believes the site of the Drovers Centre could deliver a significant number of new council homes for local people, helping to play a part in addressing the housing crisis that Islington faces.

Due to the level of investment required to bring Drovers Centre up to the required standard, the lack of funding to maintain existing services and the potential the site has to help deliver new council homes for local people, we believe that supporting people to access high quality alternative provision and activities in other more suitable venues is the best option available.

For these reasons we are proposing to stop running day services at the Drovers Day Centre.

## **Support during the consultation**

We realise that this news will be a worry to service users of Drovers Centre and their family and friends. We want to reassure you that we will work with everyone to identify different ways people can access good quality and enjoyable activities. In some cases, this will mean helping to find alternative activities and services that already exist. In other cases, we will plan how we can move certain activities to different locations in a carefully managed way.

The Drovers Centre has been part of our offer to older people for many years. However, both Islington Council and AUKI believe that many of the services and activities that are currently provided there can be accessed elsewhere or in different ways.

Both AUKI and Islington Council believe that people can often be best supported with community-based activities, located in places such as community centres, leisure centres, parks and other first class facilities in the borough, rather than traditional day centre provision. Accessing other activities in the community means people have more choices and opportunities to do activities that they already enjoy and perhaps discover some new ones too. Many activities at Drovers already have similar alternatives nearby. Other activities could be set up in alternative spaces

such as community centres, whilst preserving the relationships service users have with one another. For example, the Goodinge community centre is just 100 yards from the Drovers Centre and they already support a range of activities, some of which are similar. We will actively reach out to places such as the Goodinge community centre, to explore the role they can have in supporting activities and supporting the social connections and relationships that people value.

This consultation paper marks the start of a 6-week consultation process where service users and other people with an interest in this proposal can have their say.

For further details, please continue reading overleaf.

## **2. Our Proposal**

Our Proposal for Drovers Centre is in two main parts:

- 2.1 We propose to support people who currently use Drovers Centre to find alternative ways of meeting their needs and interests across the range of community activities that are available in the local area. This will be a carefully tailored approach depending on the individual needs and interests of the service users, and will be led by either AUKI, Islington Council or jointly dependent on the needs and circumstances of each person. It will take account of the social groups and friendships people have and seek to support and preserve the relationships that people value.
- 2.2 Once people have been successfully supported to alternative arrangements, we propose to close Drovers Centre and make the site available for building new council homes for local people.

## **3. Alternatives we have considered**

The alternative we have considered is we keep the Drovers Centre going, in one of two possible ways.

### **3.1 We could keep Drovers Centre going with AUKI running the service.**

We have considered this but we do not think it is viable because:

- The significant repair and ongoing maintenance costs of keeping the Drovers Centre open are not affordable due to Government cuts to the Council's budget.
- It has not been possible to increase the funding available to pay AUKI the amount that's needed to maintain existing services at Drovers
- The amount needed to keep on top of the maintenance and upkeep of an ageing building, and all with lower than needed funding, has meant that AUKI has had to look hard at how the charity makes best use of its resources. As a result, AUKI has decided they can have a greater impact by ceasing to provide services at Drovers from the end of January 2020 and, instead, tackle isolation in different ways.
- This does not allow the Council to build new housing on the site

### **3.2 We could ask another provider to run the service at Drovers, instead of AUKI.**

We have considered this but do not think it is viable because:

- Islington Council would still have to fund any new provider a similar amount to what's needed to maintain the Drovers service run by AUKI

- Other providers would face the same financial challenges as AUKI
- We would still have ongoing repair costs which we cannot afford
- This does not allow the Council to build new housing on the site

#### 4. What we are asking you

For this consultation, we want to hear from you on the following questions:

- How you use the Drovers Centre
- What you value about the Drovers Centre
- What other activities or services you currently use
- What support you would need to access other services or activities
- If the Drovers Centre were to close, how this would affect you personally
- If the Drovers Centre were to close, how this would affect your contact with other people.
- If you agree with the proposal to close the Drovers Centre, and why.
- If you have any suggestions for other ways to address the challenges that we have set out.

**Please use the enclosed Consultation Survey to give us your views.**

#### 5. How you can respond to us with your views

To respond to this consultation and tell us what you think about the proposal to close Drovers Day Centre, you can contact us in these ways:

Email us at: [droversconsultation@islington.gov.uk](mailto:droversconsultation@islington.gov.uk)

Call us on: 020 7527 3225

Fill in the enclosed questionnaire which you can send to us or return to Age UK

Come and talk to us at a weekly 'drop-in' at Drovers:

Council Officers will be available for you to talk to face to face each week at the Drovers Centre on the following dates and times.

Thursday 25 July	Thursday 1 August	Tuesday 6 August	Tuesday 13 August	Wednesday 21 August	Wednesday 28 August
11am-2pm	11am-2pm	11am-2pm	11am-2pm	11am-2pm	11am-2pm

You can tell council officers and AUKI staff what you think about your plans and we will record your views as part of this consultation.

Once again, we want to reassure you that we will work closely with you to ensure we understand your views about Drovers, what it means to you, and the alternative options.

During the consultation process and whilst any decisions are being made, the services at the Drovers Centre will remain in place.

# **Drovers Centre: Frequently Asked Questions**

## **1. Why is there a proposal to close the Drovers Centre?**

There are a number of reasons for this proposal:

- The Drovers Centre building has ongoing maintenance and repairs problems, which means that it is expensive to maintain and even then doesn't meet the standards we would expect.
- At the same time, due to severe cuts in funding from central government, Islington Council continues to face financial pressures and has to make difficult choices to protect vital services. The Council has already made savings of £225m since 2010, and is required to save another £50m over the next three years.
- It is estimated that it would cost £170,000 to bring the centre up to standard by carrying out essential repairs and replacement work. Unfortunately, without additional external funding, the council is not able to afford this without making cuts to other services.
- The amount needed to keep on top of the maintenance and upkeep of an ageing building, and all with lower than needed funding, has meant that AUKI has had to look hard at how the charity makes best use of its resources. As a result, AUKI has decided they can have a greater impact by ceasing to provide services at Drovers from the end of January 2020 and, instead, tackle isolation in different ways.
- There is a high demand in Islington for additional genuinely affordable council housing. The Drovers site has been identified as one of the few sites in Islington which could support additional council housing and help meet the housing needs of local residents.

## **2. Has the decision already been made to close Drovers Day Centre?**

- No decision has been made, because we have not yet heard the views of service users. At the moment the closure of the Drovers Centre is a proposal and is recommended by Council Officers for the reasons we have set out.
- The decision on whether to close Drovers Centre will be made by the Council's Executive meeting on October 17<sup>th</sup> 2019. At this meeting a summary of the views of service users will be presented alongside other evidence.

## **3. When will Drovers Centre close?**

No exact date has been set, because no decision has been made and because we want to make sure there is time to work with service users to identify and arrange alternatives. However, if the Council does decide to close the service this could happen at the end of January 2020.

#### **4. How will you support people who currently use Drovers Day Centre?**

Both Islington Council and AUKI are very aware that if we close Drovers Centre it will be worrying and distressing for people who use the services. We will support people to explore alternatives and make different arrangements. For example;

- We will ask active service users and volunteers help us to plan how to organise access to activities and services in a different way. This could be by helping people to access other services or activities that already exist, or moving some activities to other locations in a carefully managed way.
- We will provide information, advice and signposting on other activities and services.
- Where people have higher or more complex needs, we will provide one to one support to help them, including accessing an assessment of their social care needs if this is required.
- We will make sure we support people to maintain social groups and relationships that are important to them.

#### **5. What other places or activities could I go to instead?**

We believe that there are other ways to help people be active and socially connected. Islington has a lot to offer local residents and with the right support, we can help our residents who use Drovers Centre to find alternative activities or places to go. Both organisations believe that people can be supported with community-based activities, located within more universal settings (such as community centres and leisure centres), rather than traditional day centre provision. AUKI will continue to connect people who are more able to get to activities and social groups, via the AUKI social Get Togethers which already take place in venues across the borough, and those run by other partner organisations,

We think the most meaningful thing to do is to talk to you about what is suitable for you. There will be a lot of opportunities to do this and to organise to visit alternative venues and work arrangements out together. As a starting point, here is some information to help illustrate the range of activities and venues that are available. There is also the AUKI Get Together magazine which lists lots of activities in every day venues, such as cafes, museums and leisure centres.

<b>Name of Service</b>	<b>Service/activities</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Distance from Drovers Centre (in KM)</b>
Goodinge Community Centre	Lunch club, bingo, events	Goodinge Road, N7 9GZ	0.1
Kentish Town Community Centre	Ballet, knit & knatter. Events, parties, trips. Open on Saturday 1200-4:00pm	17 Busby Place, NW5 2SP	0.8
Hilldrop Community Centre	Ukulele group & sewing classes, community events	Community Lane, Hilldrop Road, N7 0JE	0.85
Camden Irish Centre	Lunch club, events	50 -52 Camden Square NW1 9XB	0.9
Sobell Leisure Centre	Better Get Together, Zumba, bowls, board games, table tennis and more	Hornsey Road, N7 7NY	1.7
Highbury Roundhouse Community Centre	Lunch club 4 days a week, wide variety of activities	71 Ronalds Road, N5 1XB	2.1
Whittington Park Community Centre	Social club provides lunch daily. £5 for 3 courses. Gardening, arts & crafts, pool, table tennis, darts, exercise classes	Yerbury Road, N19 4RS	2.3
The Claremont Project	Offer wide range of activities. Fitness & Sport, but mostly based on arts. Special events, concerts.	24-27 White Lion Street N1 9PD	3.2
Hornsey Lane Estate Community Centre	Lunch Club Monday to Friday 12-3pm, arts & crafts, gentle exercise, coach trips & holidays. Weekend events.	Hazellville Road, Islington N19 3YJ	3.8
Hanley Crouch Community Centre (Brickworks)	Friday lunch club, arts & crafts, IT	42 Crouch Hill, Brickworks Community Centre N4 4BY	3.8
The Peel	Tai Chi, Yoga, Pilates, gentle exercise, film club, sewing	3 Corners centre, Northampton Road, EC1R 0HU	3.9

Mildmay Community Centre/Partnership	Golden Oldies lunch club Friday's 12:00-3:00pm. African & Caribbean seniors group 3-7pm	Woodville Road, N16 8NA	4.3
St Luke's Community Centre	Art based activities, exercise, cooking. Gardening Club. Central street Café, offers subsidised meals to over 55's	90 Central Street, London, EC1V 8AJ	4.4
North London Cares	Offer a variety of free activities from venues across Islington/Camden	N/A	N/A

## 6. What will happen to the Drovers Centre if it closes?

The Drovers site has been identified as a good location for building new council housing for local people. Whilst exact details are still being developed, Islington Council will be developing plans to ensure that the site is used to best meet the housing needs of Islington residents.

## 7. What is the process for making this proposal and making any decisions?

- The option of closing Drovers Centre was put forward by Council Officers in Autumn 2018 as part of the Council's budget setting process. This is where options are considered to help Islington Council achieve its savings requirements. Council Members agreed that Council Officers should look more closely at this option and come back with a full recommendation.
- Council Officers have spoken to AUKI who agreed that Drovers Centre was no longer affordable to run and agreed to explore closing the service.
- AUKI's Board of Trustees have decided they cannot continue providing services at Drovers beyond the end of January 2020.
- Now there will be a 6-week consultation with service users which will run from 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2019 – 31<sup>st</sup> August 2019. This is where service users can have their say on the proposals.
- AUKI will also consult separately with staff and volunteers.
- The consultation feedback will be gathered together and presented to the Council's Executive meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> October 2019. This is where a decision will be made.

## **8. Why do AUKI think that Drovers Centre should close?**

Over recent years, AUKI has worked hard in partnership with the council and local residents to transform Drovers into a place for socialising and developing interests, as part of the AUKI network of social activities for older people within the borough.

AUKI is proud of the Activities service that it operates. At Drovers, many centre users, friends and volunteers have contributed their time, energies, and regular attendance, to create somewhere accessible to all. For some, it's a place to go along to where people can feel safe and find companionship, for others, it's a place where they can uncover new talents, and connect with others, including telling and listening to the most wonderful stories of Islington lives. In the Get Togethers, groups of people come together all over the borough – in pubs, museums, theatres and parks, to share interests and friendships, with support and encouragement from committed volunteer hosts.

Whilst the activities at Drovers are successful, the problems of running a building of the size and age of Drovers, has become increasingly difficult, taking up an increasing amount of time, energy and money. The funding available from the Council has fallen increasingly behind the full costs to the organisation of running the centre, and the continuing severe cuts in funding from central government mean that there is little prospect of increases in funding.

The additional money that AUKI needs to put into the maintenance and upkeep of the centre building has reduced their capacity to invest in other aspects of their work; for example, reaching out to people for whom attending Drovers, or anywhere would either be difficult, or would simply not suit their needs or preferences. For these people, AUKI's work consists of encouraging and supporting people, and sometimes going along with them to activities, to help them discover that they too can find interests and friends. And once over the initial hurdles, to continue providing support to help them keep attending and participating.

AUKI have gradually come to see that this "connecting and enabling" work is the area where they can make the biggest contribution to tackling isolation, particularly for older residents, together with partners across Islington: partners contributing venues, exhibitions and opportunities to exercise as part of our Get Togethers programme, and also activities run by other voluntary and community sector organisations.

After a long and careful thought we have, therefore, decided to discontinue our operation of a centre-based activities service from Drovers, from the end of January 2020.

## **9. What if I am not a service user, but have a business that might be affected by this proposal, or if I have an interest in the Drovers Centre for another reason?**

We want to hear from anyone who might be affected by this proposal, and your views will be taken into account in our decision making. Please respond to consultation and answer the questions that are relevant to you. Please make sure you state your interest in this proposal and how you think you might be affected.

## 10. What will happen next?

Over the next 6 weeks you can tell us what you think using the contact details below. We can also talk to you about what alternative services you could use if the Drovers Centre were to close.

## 11. Who can I contact for more information or if I am worried about the future?

To respond to this consultation and tell us what you think about the proposal close Drovers Day Centre, please contact Islington Council:

Email us: [droversconsultation@islington.gov.uk](mailto:droversconsultation@islington.gov.uk)  
Call us on: 0207 527 3225

Fill in the enclosed questionnaire which you can send to us at:

Islington Council,  
Drovers Consultation,  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor,  
222 Upper Street,  
London N1 1XR,

or return in person to:

Age UK Islington,  
Drovers Centre,  
North Road, N7 9EY.

Come and talk to us at a weekly 'drop-in' at Drovers. Council Officers will also be available for you to talk to you, each week at the Drovers Centre at these dates and times.

Thursday 25 July	Thursday 1 August	Tuesday 6 August	Tuesday 13 August	Wednesday 21 August	Wednesday 28 August
11am-2pm	11am-2pm	11am-2pm	11am-2pm	11am-2pm	11am-2pm

If you want to talk about the support you get from AUKI or need information about other services and activities that are be available, please contact AUKI:

**Age UK Islington**

Email: [gethelp@ageukislington.org.uk](mailto:gethelp@ageukislington.org.uk)

**Phone: 020 7281 6018**

For Islington residents, if you think you may have social care needs and want information and advice, including how to ask for an assessment of your needs, please see this webpage:

<https://www.islington.gov.uk/social-care-health/im-a-resident>

or contact:

Access and Advice Service on 020 7527 2299

[access.service@islington.gov.uk](mailto:access.service@islington.gov.uk)

If you are not an Islington resident and want to find out how your needs will be met in future, please contact the Council where you live. If you are not sure how to do this, please use any of the contact details above and we will help you identify the right place to contact.

## The Drovers Centre Consultation Survey

Before any decision is made, Islington Council would like to understand your views on the proposed closure of the Drovers Centre – how this may affect you and how you feel about this.

You can answer all the questions or you can just answer a few. Please write as much or as little as you want to.

If you have questions about this proposal, please see the Frequently Asked Questions. You can also contact us by email at [droversconsultation@islington.gov.uk](mailto:droversconsultation@islington.gov.uk) or by telephone on **020 7527 3225**

**Please return questionnaire responses to Islington Council before the 1 September 2019.**

You can send your response to us in the following ways:

- By post using the attached stamped, self-addressed envelope.
- By email to [droversconsultation@islington.gov.uk](mailto:droversconsultation@islington.gov.uk)
- You can complete the survey online using the following link [www.islington.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.islington.gov.uk/consultations)
- You can also take a completed survey to the Drovers Centre
- If you would prefer to discuss your responses over the phone you can contact us on **0207 527 3225**

If you require this document in another format please contact Islington Council on [droversconsultation@islington.gov.uk](mailto:droversconsultation@islington.gov.uk) or telephone **020 7527 3225**

## Part 1: Drovers Consultation Questions

### 1. Are you currently using the Drovers service?

Yes / No

#### a) If Yes, how often you use the service?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 or more times a week | <input type="checkbox"/> Every 2-3 months |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 times a week       | <input type="checkbox"/> Every 6 months   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 times a month      | <input type="checkbox"/> Once a year      |

#### b) If No, in what capacity are you interested in this consultation?

- Carer/Family carer
- Volunteer
- Local business
- Interested member of the public
- Other (please state) \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. What do you value about the Drovers service?

### 3. What other activities or services do you currently use?

**4. What support would you need to access other services or activities?**

**5. If the service were to close, how would this affect you personally?**

**6. If the service were to close, how would this affect your contact with other people, and why?**

**7. Do you agree with the proposal to close the Drivers service, based on the reasons given above?**

Yes / No

**a. Please can you tell us why?**

**8. Do you have any suggestions for other ways to address the challenges we have set out?**

**9. Is there anything else that you would like to tell us?**

## **Part 2: About you**

**1. Your name (optional)** \_\_\_\_\_

**2. What is your gender?**

Male

Other (please specify)

Female

Prefer not to say

**3. What is your age?**

54 years or younger

75 years or older

55 to 64 years

Prefer not to say

65 to 74 years

**4. What is your ethnic origin?**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> White British       | <input type="checkbox"/> Black/African/Caribbean/Black British |
| <input type="checkbox"/> White Irish         | <input type="checkbox"/> Other Ethnic Group (please state)     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> White Other         | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian/Asian British |  |

**5. What is your sexual orientation?**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heterosexual or straight | <input type="checkbox"/> Bisexual          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Homosexual (gay/lesbian) | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |

**6. Do you consider yourself to be transgender?**

Yes / No / Prefer not to say

**7. What is your religion?**

- |                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Christian | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Muslim    | <input type="checkbox"/> No religion          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jewish    | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hindu     |   |

**8. What is the first half of your postcode?**

\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your comments