

# One Year On: Making it Work Better



A report by the Islington Employment Services Board

Helping people  
into work

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# One Year On: Making it work better

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# Foreword

One year ago the Employment Commission launched its final report – setting out a powerful case for the importance of employment in tackling poverty and creating a fairer Islington.

The Commission highlighted the need for transformative change – to create an employment support system which takes the time to listen to people and builds on their strengths to find the good quality, long term and flexible employment that will make a big difference for them and their families.

As we set out that vision, we knew that achieving these ambitious aims would require no less than a complete transformation of the system – from building a careers’ offer which opens up opportunities for young people, to completely overhauling how employment support is delivered across the system, including working in much closer partnership with employers.

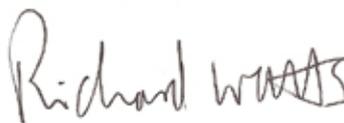
Delivering this change is the only way that we can overcome the very real barriers faced by our residents. We found no evidence that people didn’t want to work, or of a culture of worklessness, and in laying for foundations this year we have continued to see how our residents want to work and be given a chance.

In the year since that launch we have started to lay the foundations for change. We have fully implemented our iWork team, building a coaching and mentoring offer that is targeted to those who need it most; we have brought together front line practitioners to better understand and

implement exactly what we mean by excellent employment support – to drive up standards and give our residents the support they deserve. We are working closely with committed employers to create jobs for local residents and to recruit more employers to the cause and we are creating the opportunities for young people to better understand their options.

This strong foundation is building our capacity to enact the change we need, and is already bearing fruit – as can be seen in the powerful stories in this report.

However, there is still much to do. Rates of unemployment in Islington remain too high and too many residents do not get the support they deserve. This is particularly true of some of those who are out of reach of the system – those who are disabled or with long term health conditions and young people who opt out or are excluded. We have laid the building blocks for change, but we must continue the leadership and partnership necessary to realise the full ambition of the Commission and its vision.



**Cllr Richard Watts**  
**Leader, Islington Council**  
**Chair of the Islington Employment**  
**Services Board**  
**November 2015**

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# Delivering a radical change in employment

The Islington Employment Commission set out a clear vision for how we can work better to help Islington people to get, keep and enjoy their job.

It found that, in Islington, whilst work is the single best way that we can tackle poverty and create a fairer local area, our employment support system was not doing enough to overcome the very real barriers which people face towards moving into employment.

Since its launch, great progress has been made in implementing its findings – this report provides an overview of progress and sets out what still needs to change.

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# 1. Creating change for the people who need it

The Employment Commission recommended no less than a complete overhaul of the employment support sector, changing how it was organised, who it targeted and how it worked.

Central to this was building a partnership between employment support professionals across sectors and organisations in order to create a stronger sense of an employment services workforce for Islington. The Islington Employability Practitioners Network now brings together frontline practitioners from over 60 organisations. Its charter set out its members' commitment to working with people through Listening, Coaching, Empowering and Trusting – a way of working which supports people to support themselves and which gets results by building long term confidence and self-esteem.

Forging partnerships has been central to building an employment support system which works for people, with shared ownership, leadership and measures of

success. Islington has now built local, regional and national partnerships to get its employment support right – and the Council is working closely with partners to press the case for devolved employment support for London.

These partnerships have supported investment in targeted help for those who need it most – parents, carers, those from ethnic minority backgrounds who can face discrimination and, in particular, disabled people and those with long term health conditions who currently claim Employment Support Allowance. This targeting and partnership building is working to provide a better and more effective front door – to stop people from being shuttled from pillar to post between the Job Centre, Council and the other services they may be accessing.

The Employment Commission said we should	How far are we in achieving the aspirations set out in the report?	Progress
<p><b>Promote a targeted casework and coaching approach for all those working to provide frontline employment support</b></p>	<p>The Islington Commitment and Charter sets out standards for high quality employment support that gets results. Further work is needed to fully roll out and embed this approach across the partnership.</p>	
<p><b>Ensure intensive, tailored support and coaching is provided to those who need it most</b></p>	<p>1,023 people have been supported into work in 2014/15 through employment support provided by Islington Council and a leading local consortium of partners – a significant increase from 816 in 2013/14 and the iWork coaching model is supporting this progress.</p>	
<p><b>Forge a stronger partnership between everyone involved in employment support to provide seamless and good quality support</b></p>	<p>The Islington Employability Practitioners Network has been established to bring together partners. Our strategic partnership for employment is developing clusters of organisations in targeted areas to deliver a seamless offer across the borough.</p>	
<p><b>Maximise the contribution of all local services to boost employment</b></p>	<p>A Health and Work programme has been established to put employment at the heart of health outcomes – this includes an innovative pilot project in GPs surgeries. Clusters of local organisations, including the voluntary sector and housing associations are further building and growing the scope of employment support.</p>	

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## 2. Employers creating change

Employers have a vital role to play in shaping the areas in which they live and work. The Employment Commission demonstrated both the positive contribution that employers make and the very real business benefits on offer for employers in engaging in their local area.

The Islington Aspires website responds to feedback from employers that they wanted one place to find out the most effective way for them to get involved. It provides five easy ways for employers to support their local community – from how to get the best people by recruiting locally and flexibly, to developing your own workforce whilst giving something back to the local community through mentoring young people and those looking for work. Over 10 employers have already demonstrating examples of good practice and to show how they are working in line with the vision of Islington Aspires.

A Business Engagement Leadership Group is coordinating and further developing employer engagement across the borough so that there are easy ways to get involved locally – and this approach is demonstrating real results. For example in 2015, 108 Islington residents have got into employment through referrals to

King's Cross Recruit – a significant improvement on last year – meaning that local residents are now benefitting from the redevelopment and regeneration of the King's Cross area.

Islington Council is leading by example having become a Timewise Council for flexible employment, has joined the BIG Alliance to promote staff volunteering and development and has recruited 27 local apprentices since the launch of the Commission.

The case studies throughout this report highlight the contribution made by employers and the good work that employers are doing to close the gaps between the opportunities they have and the people that they need – at all stages of their career. There is more to do to turn these examples of good practice into wholesale change in recruitment and day to day business practices.

The Employment Commission said we should	How far are we in achieving the aspirations set out in the report?	Progress
<p><b>Create a single place for employers to go to get information to help them to support local people</b></p>	<p>The Islington Aspires website sets out five clear ways that employers can get involved, including outlining the business benefits and has been supported by over 10 employers at its launch.</p>	
<p><b>Work with employers to recruit better locally and put something back into the communities in which they live and work</b></p>	<p>108 Islington residents have secured employment since January 2015 at the King's Cross redevelopment – a significant increase on the previous year. 318 positions have been brokered from April-June 2015 and 16 employers are signed up to the BIG Alliance.</p>	
<p><b>Create champions across sectors who lead by example in creating inclusive and flexible workforces</b></p>	<p>Islington Council is leading by example, gaining accreditation as a Timewise Council for flexible employment and recruiting 27 local apprentices since Nov 2014. Other leading local employers have stepped up to the plate as champions of flexible and diverse workforces.</p>	

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## 3. Creating change for the next generation

Work with young people is crucial to turning off the tap of unemployment for the next generation. Whilst there is no shortage of aspiration amongst young people, and whilst there is some excellent provision, overall the Commission found that, for young people aged up to 19, careers education is often not good enough and young people do not get enough opportunities to get a real understanding of the world of work.

A renewed focus on youth employment and the importance of careers has focussed on challenging and supporting schools and colleges to raise aspirations and broaden opportunities. A new youth employment network has been established bringing together local providers including Housing Associations and Arsenal in the Community and is working closely with the Council's newly established Youth Employment Team. Since launch, a programme of bringing employers into schools focussing on STEM subjects, an increased schools mentoring programme run by the BIG Alliance and the youth employment event Aspire 2015 have started to build momentum to increase and improve both careers education and employer engagement – though once again, it will take further time and effort

to transform these green shoots into wholesale transformation.

Islington will work with secondary schools and City and Islington College to develop and implement a minimum careers entitlement alongside a Careers and Work Related Learning Leads Network to share best practice. However, as outlined in the Commission report, there is potential for much more to be done – some of this needs to be on a national level by taking careers and vocational education more seriously, but there is much more to be done locally to ensure that the offer is consistent across schools and that young people in the 19 to 24 age group receive the additional support that they often need to access the labour market successfully.

The Employment Commission said we should	How far are we in achieving the aspirations set out in the report?	Progress
<p><b>Create a much stronger link between education and business</b></p>	<p>A dedicated Islington Youth Employment Team is working in close partnership with Islington Schools Improvement. They have delivered Aspire 2015, a week of activities focussed on bringing young people closer to the world of work and are developing further curriculum links between employers and schools, alongside partners.</p>	
<p><b>Ensure all young people get the high quality careers education they are entitled to</b></p>	<p>A new Careers and Work Related Learning Leads Network will bring together lead practitioners from schools and colleges to share good practice and to build a high quality consistent careers offer that is well known by pupils, staff, parents, carers and governors.</p>	
<p><b>Support young people who opt out of, or are excluded from the system entirely</b></p>	<p>Close partnership working with New River College and Alternative Provision is developing links with employers to inspire young people – such as with Sky Academy – these need to be developed further with a wider range of employers and expanded to include mentoring and links to key growth sectors.</p> <p>There is strong support for those up to 19 who aren't in education, employment or training through tailored one to one support and through the open door of Islington's integrated youth hubs - Lift, Platform and the Rosebowl.</p>	

# Green & Fortune: recruiting locally to flexible jobs is vital for our business

For Green & Fortune, an award winning company specialising across three sectors of the hospitality industry: café, restaurant and events, recruiting local people creates a workforce that is available whatever the weather or state of the Tube network, and which can promote hospitality careers in the community, while a flexible workforce is vital for the needs of their clients, allowing them to host events at all times of day and night.

## Why do Green & Fortune need to recruit locally and flexibly?

Karolina Vithen, HR Manager, makes clear that the demands of the hospitality industry require a workforce that can cover days, weekends, evenings and late nights to meet client needs. Local recruitment ensures continuity of business – Green & Fortune clients like Facebook, Google, the BBC and Eurostar, for example, would not react well if a tube strike or heavy snowfall prevented them hosting their events, so Karolina needs staff who walk or take the bus to work as the backbone of her workforce.

## What benefits have Green & Fortune found from local and flexible recruitment?

Working with local colleges, recruitment agencies and charities to engage local young people to work for them gives Green & Fortune access to a team of staff that are not only young and energetic, but interested in work that, for example, fits around their studies, and who are able to get to work even in severe weather or during a tube strike.

Moreover, for particularly hard to fill roles, such as chefs, a proactive approach helps Karolina convince young people to consider a career as a chef and thus build up a new workforce for the long term.

Karolina also sees the local residents that she has recruited as ambassadors for the brand, as they go out from work and tell their friends about the opportunity working for Green & Fortune presents, helping her to fill more and more roles with local residents.

'The ever changing landscape of Kings Cross is creating new employment opportunities not seen in this area for a very long time: prospects for local people have increased dramatically.

**John Nugent**  
**Green & Fortune Chief Executive**



**Green &  
Fortune**

# Creating change for the people who need it

The Employment Commission said “We need to expand and improve the support available to Islington people to get, keep and enjoy their job. We should target and tailor our help to reach those who really need it, finding creative solutions, in particular through coaching and mentoring, to help people into work. We need to bring together services to maximise our resources and provide seamless support to get people into employment.”

## **We have**

- Fully internally embedded the iWork model of employment support which takes a tailored coaching and mentoring approach to work closely with residents, supporting and challenging them to get into the sustainable employment that works for them
- Established an Employability Practitioners Network to bring front line practitioners together and raise the standards of employment support across the board – including through an Islington Commitment and Charter, spelling out the quality standards that all members of the partnership are working towards
- Established a Health and Work programme to promote a greater focus on employment in the health care system and to support disabled people and those with long term health conditions into work that works for them and improves their health and wellbeing.
- Forged a strong strategic partnership across local providers dedicated to tackling unemployment in Islington and laying the foundations for success by creating new pathways and partnerships – including through Islington Council working closely with government and pressing the case for devolution of employment services to a London level.

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# Transforming the system takes time – but we have laid strong foundations for change

The Employment Commission set an ambitious vision – to radically overhaul the employment support system – so that it works for the people who need it most. In order to do this, and to make the most of limited resources the system must effectively target its help to the parents, carers, disabled people and those whose background means they face barriers to getting into work and take the time to work with them intensively and in a way which works for them to get them into long term and sustainable employment. This was, and remains, what is needed and getting it right is at the heart of creating a system that works with and for people.

The building blocks for this change are a system which is able to target and tailor through a coherent and cohesive

employment support workforce – working across sectors and agencies and with a coaching and mentoring approach which takes the time to support these groups – with a particular focus on developing their skills, building their capabilities, confidence and self-esteem.

Over the last year, the Islington Employability Practitioners Network has been established bringing together over 60 frontline employment coaches from local organisations. This network has set out what we mean by excellent employment support through its Charter. This Charter sets out what works and how practitioners can practically take this forward –laying out the road map to a more effective employment support service.

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## The Islington Employability Charter

Working together to help Islington residents find, keep and enjoy their job

### **Our commitment:**

**Listen:** Listen to the customer in an impartial and non-judgemental way

**Coach:** Take a tailored coaching and mentoring approach

**Empower:** Nurture and support but challenge and stretch too

**Trust:** Form a trusting and consistent relationship with residents

**Grow:** Aspire to develop the quality and shape of our service

### **We'll make this happen by:**

1. Working in partnership with other services in Islington and communicating well;
2. Making time to have proper conversations with residents and fully understanding what they need and how to get there;
3. Creating a place where residents feel valued and confident;
4. Encouraging residents to try new things;
5. Taking responsibility to refer residents for extra help where they need it;
6. Having access to good and current careers information and strong links with employers;
7. Keeping up to date with what is out there;
8. Working with employers to provide high quality, flexible jobs which meet business needs;
9. Taking advantage of work placements and volunteering opportunities to provide real life experience in the world of work;
10. Providing ongoing support to residents during employment.

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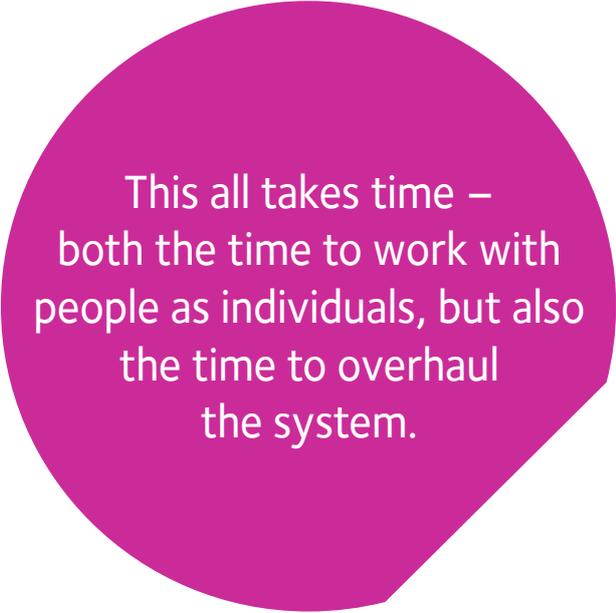
**The link between health and employment is crucial to supporting those who need the most help – a health and work programme will allow us to provide the support people need and to target our efforts**

Islington has very high rates of people claiming Employment Support Allowance due to ill health or disabilities and this number has remained broadly stable in the year since the Commission launched its report – as it has over the last 15 years.

There is not enough good quality employment support which effectively engages with residents on health-related benefits. Islington's Making it Real Board of experts by experience has reported that this is extremely frustrating as the support just isn't there for a group of people who often need the most targeted and tailored help to find sustainable employment.

As the Employment Commission reported most disabled people and those with long term health conditions want to work – but many face very real barriers and need additional support to be put

into place to get them into the long term employment that is suitable for them.



**This all takes time – both the time to work with people as individuals, but also the time to overhaul the system.**

The Council has agreed an ambitious target to reduce the number of people claiming ESA by 2,660 by March 2019 by significantly improving employment outcomes for residents with a health condition or disability. This would bring it in line with the inner London average and constitute a major shift for a group of people who have been side lined within the employment support system for too long.

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In order to achieve this, an ambitious Health and Work programme has been established, run jointly with Islington Clinical Commissioning Group and Islington Council in partnership with Jobcentre Plus. This will build on existing work such as Mental Health Working, Jobs in Mind and the Access to Work scheme – a national scheme which provides grants to allow disabled people to get the adaptations they need to be able to access work – which currently supports Islington’s Learning Disability Employment Project.

It will build on a new trial of ‘employment clinics’ in four Islington GP surgeries. As well as putting employment support into the practice making it easier for people to access help – the trial is also making it easier for doctors to refer patients for employment advice – in the same way that they would refer them for further healthcare treatment.

**Islington Council believes that devolving employment services to London will make a real difference –**

**making the system easier to understand and better targeted – and we are pressing the case for change**

Whilst this progress is creating a more tailored and personalised experience for people, the employment support system can still often be confusing and disjointed – with responsibility dispersed among many different partners and agencies. The Employment Commission has galvanised the need to transform this and brought partners around the table with a genuine wish to change and improve the system. Front line practitioners are now sharing best practice and adopting the coaching approach that we know gets results. The Health and Work programme is bringing employment into the health service in a new and innovative way which will make a real difference to people with long term health needs and disabled people.

However, alongside these vital building blocks, change must happen at a national

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and regional level. Islington Council has been working closely with government – through the Department for Work and Pensions, the Treasury and the Department for Communities and Local Government as well as with London Councils and partners through the Central London Forward consortium of inner London boroughs to press the case for devolution of employment services to a London wide level.

Creating a single front door into employment services in London would stop the feeling of being passed from pillar to post between services – something the Employment Commission found was a real problem, as well as allowing us to focus the full range of resources to that targeted group who need it most and who otherwise won't get enough of the support that they need. It is this fundamental shift which will allow us to fully realise the change that we need.

## Case study

### **We need to diversify our approaches to recruitment and employment to get the best out of disabled people and to allow them to flourish**

Asma, 26, is a bright, ambitious and driven law graduate who has lived, studied or worked near the Islington estate she lives in all her life. She has hearing and sight impairments, but has always been independent. Despite graduating with a good degree, Asma found finding and keeping work difficult. A trip meant many invasive surgeries for facial reconstruction and her eyesight can badly deteriorate from one hour to the next. Asma is tough on herself and how this might be interpreted by employers, 'they say you shouldn't have gaps on a CV but mine's full of them! Why would they want someone whose health history is so poor? How can they rely on me?'

Asma's iWork coach supported her to get volunteering experience at a cancer research charity and then a paid evening role in a department store. Asma says she sees her coaches as mentors who have supported her and even helped her with make up before an interview. Asma considers this period, 'the best I've felt about myself yet,' but still worries that she will be overlooked for 'healthier' candidates in the future.

*\*Names have been changed*

# Euromonitor

Not only has global market research and analysis firm Euromonitor provided mentoring for young people with learning disabilities, but doing so has led the organisation to change its own HR processes to provide more opportunities for them.

## What led Euromonitor to start providing opportunities for young disabled people?

Corporate Social Responsibility Manager Catherine Dix discovered an enthusiasm amongst staff to help local people with learning disabilities with their employability. This has led to a partnership with Samuel Rhodes school to provide mentoring for those in their 6th form focussing on employability skills, body language and presentation. Teachers soon noticed positive changes in the students, but Euromonitor staff also became increasingly aware of the challenges faced by those with learning disabilities. 'It was frustrating for our staff members because they couldn't see why there weren't more jobs suitable for these people', comments Catherine.

Corporate Social Responsibility isn't just about going out and painting a fence or making a donation.

## What impact has mentoring had on the firm?

Euromonitor have looked at their own processes to see if they can offer more opportunities to disabled people. As a result of this, they have used 'job carving' to find a role suitable for those with one of their ex-mentees from Samuel Rhodes. 'She will come in once a week as a trainee receptionist, with a view to it becoming a permanent job'. As well as a great opportunity for the individual, it also gives the firm a chance to test job carving as an approach. If it works well, they will have a clear model to replicate across the business. The involvement of the firm's CEO (a mentor himself) has also been crucial in ensuring that the company as a whole learns from these experiences.

## What have been the business benefits of mentoring and 'job carving'?

There have been clear benefits to the firm. By asking all staff to analyse their tasks, they have been able to increase their efficiency by removing tasks that could potentially be done by someone else. Working with those with learning disabilities has also led to growth and development opportunities for staff. One staff member commented 'I believe I have become a better manager, because it has made me think more about how I explain concepts and communicate'.



**Euromonitor**

# Employers creating change

The Employment Commission said “We need to enable employers to recruit better locally by engaging with and supporting their local community. We need to create one place where employers can get the help they need to recruit locally. We need dynamic businesses who can get involved and make real change happen for the local area.

## **We have**

- Created Islington Aspires – a single place where employers can find out how best to get involved in their local area by recruiting better locally and the significant business benefits that this provides – including for developing the workforce.
- Led on partnerships with local employers to develop an innovative programmes to support local residents as demonstrated in the case studies throughout this report.
- Led by example – for example the Council has become a fully accredited Timewise council for flexible working and joined the Businesses for Islington Giving (BIG) Alliance to develop an employee volunteering programme.

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# Islington Aspires – providing one place where employers can find out how best to get involved locally, and why it's good for business

The Employment Commission heard loud and clear that employers were frustrated at how difficult it was to find out how best to get involved locally and what the benefits were for their business.

Islington Aspires brings together five simple ways that employers can get involved – to benefit Islington and its residents, but also with clear business benefits for them.

- 1. Recruit Better Locally** – create the flexible employment that allows employers to draw from the widest possible pool of talent and get support from local agencies to fill those opportunities with the right people
- 2. Develop your Workforce** – skilled volunteering, for example supporting local job seekers, allows the work force to develop their skills as well as support excellent local charities and people
- 3. Pay the London Living Wage** – independent research shows that 80% of London employers believed

that paying the living wage had enhanced the quality of staff work, absenteeism had fallen by about 25% and 70% felt it had increased consumer's awareness of their commitment to being an ethical employer

- 4. Inspire the Next Generation** – mentor and support young people to achieve their full potential
- 5. Build the Workforce of the Future** – open up entry level opportunities, apprenticeships and Saturday jobs to ensure that employers have a clear pipeline of the talents and skills that they need to grow.

**A partnership of local agencies and employers are working together to build easy, effective pathways to link local people to great employers and to build a pipeline of opportunities**

By bringing together all the partners who work with local employers into a Business Engagement Leadership Group – Islington is building a strong foundation for its work with local employers.

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The group target key growth sectors for Islington; hospitality and catering, construction, retail, health and social care, creative and digital and financial and legal – including their back office and supply chains with the aim of promoting and growing employer engagement in Islington – at all levels.

This allows for a concerted partnership with employers, which is delivering real results by growing and promoting the efforts of employers to recruit more flexibly and work with local people so that they are able to get the employment that works for them. BIG Alliance members such as Expedia, Barclays and MUFG are working with local jobseekers to develop their CVs, research available jobs and link this skills support directly into employment. K&M McLoughlin's five week training programme allows local residents to progress directly into the painting and decorating industry – linking real jobs to training provision. Montcalm hotels are similarly tackling the skills shortage in the hospitality industry by working closely with Central Foundation Boys School to create the workforce of the future by helping to deliver a BTeC hospitality qualification that delivers real life hands-on experience of the world of work. These employers and many others are grasping the nettle of the challenges in their own industry by

realising the need to recruit better and more flexibly locally – through close partnerships with local services in order to create a clear progression from training, education and employment support services through to long term sustainable employment.

### **Employers are working hard to lead by example**

The case studies and examples throughout this report, and on the Islington Aspires website, demonstrate the clear commitment by a wide range of employers to step up to the challenge and lead by example.

Islington Council is also committed to putting into practice the vision of the Employment Commission – starting with its own practices. For example, in July 2015 Islington became an accredited Timewise Council for flexible working. This means that the Council is committed to embedding flexible working across the organisation. The Council believes that this has very real business benefits – opening up vacancies to a wider pool of talent, so that the right people get the opportunities that work for them – and so the Council are committed to promoting the benefits of flexible working to other employers.

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Islington Council has reviewed its apprenticeship programme following the recommendations of the Commission – to make sure good quality opportunities offer real progression and parity with other forms of recruitment and has grown its programme to recruit 27 apprentices since the Employment Commission launched in November 2014 – including those with a declared disability and lone parents, in keeping with the Commission’s focus and targeted approach.

Islington’s Get Set for Work programme provides work experience for local residents looking for that stepping stone and confidence builder into work and will have supported 25 people by the end of this year. Both of these programmes benefit from a staff mentoring programme – bringing the considerable benefits of mentoring for both mentor and mentee as well as for the Council as an organisation.

Suppliers of the council are being supported to lead by example through the promotion of social value through contracts, building employment opportunities, work experience and training schemes into what is asked for when services are commissioned.

## Case study

### Benefitting from the opportunities generated by the redevelopment of King’s Cross

Pierre, 45, had been unemployed for over a year when he was supported by the iWork Service and King’s Cross Recruit into work in the retail sector at the redeveloped St Pancras International.

Having been employed as a cleaner and then promoted to supervisor at a private member’s club in Central London, Pierre described his year out of work as ‘the most stressful of his life’ and as his savings ran out it put considerable strain on him and his family.

Pierre had previously relied on word of mouth from family and friends to get into work, and he found it difficult applying for work online due to a lack of feedback and chance for employers to get to know him – saying, ‘it doesn’t work – not for the kind of jobs I’m looking for. Employers need to meet you, to size you up, to decide, ‘here’s a reliable employee.’

*\*Names have been changed*

# Atkins

Engineering firm Atkins have linked up with nine schools across London to promote careers in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths). In Islington they have been working with Highbury Fields school. They have also offered 30 students work experience placements in their London office this year, and are expanding the scheme to over 50 students next year.

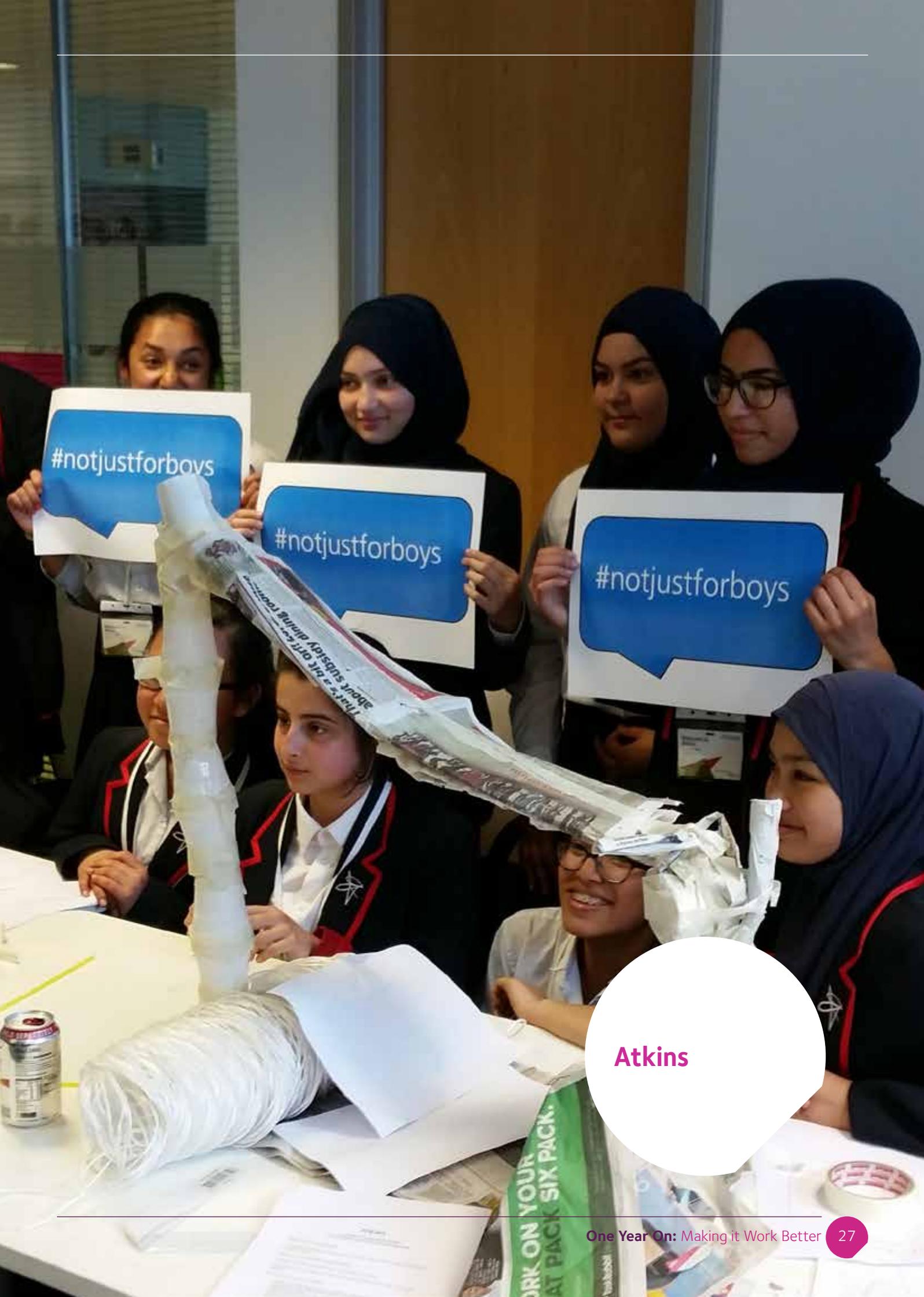
## **Why does Atkins devote time to promoting STEM careers?**

Liam Bryant, a graduate engineer, explains that the industry faces two problems- they don't have enough new engineers joining, and the people that do apply have been overwhelmingly white and male. The way to solve both problems at the same time is to encourage more girls and people from ethnic minorities to consider a career in engineering. Hana Shoib, now an assistant engineer, explains that students often don't understand what engineering is. 'When I was at school, I was never told about careers in engineering. We need to show students that engineers are just as important to society as doctors and other professionals.'

## **What have Atkins done to engage young students?**

Christina McHugh, a graduate engineer, sees engineering as primarily revolving around communication, design, and team working. 'It's actually really creative, and that's what you have to sell'. To demonstrate this, they ran an 'egg drop challenge' at Highbury Fields girls school, which involved students designing and creating cradles to catch eggs. This clearly inspired many students, with one commenting 'I learned there are a lot of different types of engineering, anyone can be an engineer- women can be engineers too'. These students are often the same people that fill up the work experience placements that Atkins offers, for which they regularly receive applications over six months early.

'When children or teenagers think of engineers, they often think of a train driver.'



#notjustforboys

#notjustforboys

#notjustforboys

Atkins

# Creating change for the next generation

The Employment Commission said “All young people must get the support they deserve; by the council, schools and local employers working together to create a culture of employment in our schools and colleges.”

## **We have**

- Launched Islington Aspire – a week of employer focussed activities to allow young people and employers to meet, to give young people experience of the world of work and ultimately, access to employment opportunities.
- Developed a borough wide programme of events to bring employers into the curriculum – working in partnership with local schools to involve young people and give them a taster of the careers available to them in growth sectors.
- Expanded the Mentoring Works programme, run by the BIG Alliance, to eight schools and colleges.
- Established a Youth Employment Network to bring together local providers to better coordinate the links between employers and young people.

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# Inspiring and supporting young people is the only way that we can turn off the tap of unemployment in Islington

High quality careers education and employment support for young people is the only way that we can transform the aspiration and ambition of our young people into reality. The Employment Commission found no shortage of aspiration amongst young people, but, whilst there are some examples of good practice, careers education is not consistently good enough and too many young people are not getting the support they need.

The Employment Commission has galvanised a renewed focus on careers education and bringing employers into schools and colleges in order to bridge the gap with the world of work. This leadership will ultimately deliver the change to enhance and increase the offer to young people.

As part of this, Islington is driving the delivery of a consistent minimum offer for the provision of careers education and guidance alongside a shared understanding of what good careers education looks like. There is clear statutory guidance for schools and colleges for the provision of careers education – however individual schools currently take different approaches and there has been little opportunity to share

good practice and learn from each other.

## **Forging stronger links between employers and education allows young people to get the real life experience they need to decide where they want to go**

Islington is a thriving part of the growing London economy – meaning that it has a wide range of employers available to make that link between education and work. Many employers and schools already have programmes which bring employers into the classroom or take students out to their businesses to see how things work in practice. However, there has been little coordination of this offer. Since the launch of the Employment Commission the Youth Employment and Schools improvement teams have been working with schools, colleges and local providers such as the BIG Alliance and Business in the Community to build partnerships and better plan and timetable this offer.

The BIG Alliance Mentoring Works programme has now expanded to eight schools and colleges with nine cohorts of students, bringing employers such as Expedia, Deutsche Bank, Macquarie, Axa,

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Dalziel and Pow and MUFG into schools and colleges to raise aspirations and confidence amongst young people and increase their understanding of their future career and education goals. In 2014/15, 112 students and 75 mentors took part in the programme. One student commented on the benefit of the programme, “My first language is not English and I’ve always felt at a disadvantage and was afraid to speak out loud. I’m more confident to do that now.”

City and Islington College last year provided apprenticeship training to 86 businesses – mostly small and medium sized enterprises. 157 local businesses visited the college to mentor students and provide insight into employment and over 400 businesses provided work experience for students studying vocational courses.

From September 2015 a borough wide programme of events has been established targeting specific growth sectors and careers – including IT, health and medical science, hospitality and catering and construction – to engage and inspire young people to find out about the broad range of careers on offer. This built upon the programme to link employers into the STEM curriculum – which will support uptake of these subjects as young people develop a better understanding of the types of careers that these can lead to. For example, Atkins Global, the UK’s third largest engineering consultancy has been running challenge days at Highbury Fields

to develop pupils understanding of the range of careers in engineering and to encourage a more diverse group to consider the potential of a career in this industry – which traditionally struggled, in particular in getting more women involved.

### **Developing practical pathways into employment helps us provide targeted support to young people**

Alongside the work to improve careers education across the board, the Employment Commission highlighted the need to target support to those who need it the most – in particular those who might not be following a clear and linear academic path.

All young people leaving Year 11 or 12 in an Islington school or college are supported to have an offer of ongoing learning – either in fulltime education, or through an apprenticeship or job with accredited training, with help for the most vulnerable to take up the offer. Since the launch of the Employment Commission in November, 24 young people between 16-24 years old have started as apprentices within Islington Council and other employers are building their offer in partnership with the Youth Employment Team. Apprenticeship opportunities, entry level job and traineeships including a Business Admin Apprenticeship with Linklaters, chef apprenticeships with Jamie’s Fifteen and an Information and Research Apprenticeship at Slaughter and May

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have all recently recruited Islington young people with the support of the Youth Employment Team.

By opening up different pathways and giving tasters of different types of employment – young people can be well informed to make the choice of what works for them. This includes ensuring that good apprenticeships which offer real progression are matched up to the school timetable – allowing young people to take them up at the right time for them. We are working closely with employers to create clear training pathways into employment – with a particular focus on catering and hospitality – a growth area for Islington and developing a Saturday jobs programme that allows young people to take on work whilst still in education – something that can be difficult to access in London.

In February 2015, the first Islington Aspire took place – a weeklong event made up of practical activities designed to inspire young residents aged 18-24 who were unemployed to take the next step upon their journey into employment. The week involved over 20 local employers including Arsenal in the Community, K&M McLoughlin, Jamie Oliver and digital agency Launch Pad, offering 2-3 hour sessions for young people to find out more about their business, employment and training opportunities and over 40 young people got involved. A speed networking event gave young job seekers the chance to

sell themselves to local employers who recruited for live vacancies – so that unlike a more traditional careers fair there was a chance to secure employment on the day, and several secured work experience, apprenticeships and employment following the event. The success of Aspire will be replicated, with a speed networking event taking place in November 2015 to continue to build and grow this level of employer engagement.

## Case study

### **Building the confidence and resilience will allow young people to prosper**

Aaron, 20, lives with his mum, dad and sister in Tufnell Park and has been looking for work since he left college at 16 – when he felt overwhelmed and stressed by his new environment.

Aaron is desperate to find employment but his employment journey has been a frustrating and emotional one. He has struggled with low confidence and self-esteem since he was bullied at school. A car accident in year 7 left him with serious injuries and when he returned to school he struggled to make friends. This low self-esteem has translated into his search for work and Aaron has had his confidence knocked when things haven't gone to plan saying, 'none of the employers who have turned me down have given me feedback...I think I am a good communicator but maybe I'm doing something wrong. I just want to know how to improve.'

*\*Names have been changed*

# Montcalm Hotels and Central Foundation Boys' School

Montcalm Hotels are successfully building a workforce for the future, despite operating in a sector which has significant recruitment challenges. An innovative partnership with Central Foundation Boys' School is inspiring students to think about a career in hospitality.

## **Why establish a partnership with schools?**

For Montcalm, recent changes in legislation mean they can no longer rely on international students for their workforce. For Central Foundation, the hands-on experience offered by Montcalm has hugely enhanced their BTEC Hospitality qualification. The chance for students to get a taste for working in a real hotel alongside their academic study has made the course an exciting and popular choice with impressive employment outcomes.

"We have the opportunity to input into the course and help shape the skills and expertise of our future workforce."

## **What benefits has the partnership brought to the business?**

Steven Sands, Cluster Operations Manager at Montcalm Hotels sees the ability to have 'input in the learning' on the BTEC course as a huge benefit. It lets them shape and influence the skills and expertise of the workforce of the future, at a time when it is exceptionally difficult to recruit enough good quality staff in the service industry. For Sands, the programme also provides developmental opportunities to his own senior staff. They attend the BTEC course to bring their experience and insight into the students' learning. They get an opportunity to 'see the rewards' of their commitment in the enthusiasm and development of the young people.

## **What are the benefits for the school and their students?**

Lesley Thain at Central Foundation talks about young people whose whole personality seems to have been changed by the experience of a two week placement in a Montcalm Hotel. Students say that the aspect of the course they value the most is that the modules include first-hand experience and are directly related to the Montcalm Hotel, which makes what they are learning so much more engaging.



**Montcalm  
Hotels**

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## What's Next?

The first year of working towards the ambition and vision of the Employment Commission has allowed us to build solid foundations and build the case for change. However there is still much to do to fully realise the vision of the Commission.

The headline statistic of the high numbers claiming Employment Support Allowance, have not changed in the first year of implementation. Whilst, in some ways, this is unsurprising – they have been static for the last 15 years – it is not good enough and our next step must be to bring the number of people claiming this down by getting them into jobs that work for them – in order to meet our ambitious equality objective.

In order to do this we will ensure a stronger focus on employment in the local health care system including through health led employment clinics based in GP surgeries, through expanding the availability of high quality employment support across the borough – including with voluntary sector partners and through working relentlessly to drive up the quality of employment support, through the Employability Practitioners Network in

order to meet the ambitious principles of the Islington Employment Charter.

Whilst there is much to do to ensure that employment support is up to meeting these challenges, there is also a vital role for employers to step up to the plate to meet their future needs in terms of recruitment and productivity. We have seen an encouraging growth in employers leading the way in providing apprenticeships, paying the living wage and becoming more open to the business benefits of flexible working. However, there remains a sense that this is peripheral activity, a 'nice to have' that is not necessarily integral to day to day business needs.

The next step in achieving this needs to be a wholesale shift towards placing sustainable, flexible and local recruitment at the heart of recruitment practice and business planning in order to meet the needs of the London labour market. The hospitality industry is just one sector which is facing a marked skills shortage and a flexible and creative approach will be needed in order to support sustainable growth. Islington will support an industry led effort to provide leadership to tackle this shortage from top to bottom and will

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be continuing to work with other sectors and their supply chains to galvanise the leadership and buy in to reimagine how employers widen the talent pool available through greater diversity.

Similarly, there are long term challenges in how we turn off the tap of unemployment through ensuring that everyone has the skills that they need in order to get the sustainable employment they need for themselves and their families. This means building on our offer to schools and colleges to continue to drive forward the recommendations the Employment Commission, in particular where progress has not been as strong as we might have liked – for example in creating a minimum careers offer. As outlined in the recommendations of the report, Islington will recruit a specialist information and advice professional who will establish and coordinate a careers network which will support staff in schools to improve and enhance their careers offer – as well as building crucial links with employers. The Youth Employment Team and the new Post 16 Progression Team will work together to ensure that young people have access to information about all their options post 16, 17 and 18, including

apprenticeships and vocational options. There will be events held to provide information for young people, teachers and parents which will be supported by employers who are already offering apprenticeships – including a further series of Aspire speed networking events.

In addition to this we will also develop a comprehensive skills strategy for Islington which will forge those much stronger links between education and training provision and the needs of the local labour market – with a particular focus on growth sectors.

Islington Council will continue to seek greater local influence and control over employment support and skills by continuing to press the case with central government for a devolution deal for London which will allow for a skills and employment service which better fit the London labour market and which are able to be much more responsive to local employers – to ensure a clear pathway from training and support into long term and sustainable employment.

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# Acknowledgements

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