

# Fairness in tough times

## Implementing the recommendations of the Islington Fairness Commission Update 27 February 2014

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In June 2010, Islington Council established the country's first Fairness Commission. In its final report, *Closing the Gap* (June 2011), the Commission set out 19 recommendations aimed at tackling the main causes and effects of inequality and poverty in Islington. In May 2013, we provided an update on what had been achieved since April 2011, and on next steps. This report sets out progress during the past year.

### Fair pay

Last May we reported great progress – with the Council's pay ratio down to 1:10, all Council employees paid at least the London Living Wage (LLW), and 92% of our contracts LLW compliant. Many local partners, including public sector organisations, schools, businesses and voluntary and community sector organisations, had also adopted LLW and were reviewing their contracts.

*We committed to continue efforts to ensure the remaining 8% of Council contracts pay LLW, and to promote wider take up amongst other Islington employers.*

#### Progress this year...

- ✓ New contracts have been signed for our domiciliary care staff. This means that from June 2014 (when these contracts come into force) 98% of Council contracts will be LLW compliant
- ✓ At National Living Wage Week in November 2013, Islington was recognised for having the highest number of accredited LW employers in the country (35), including the first LW accredited Clinical Commissioning Group

### Dealing with debt

Last year we reported on a range of measures to provide support and advice for those struggling with debt. These included the opening of a new CAB, additional funding for debt advice and financial literacy work, promoting saving and lending with the Credit Union and a new Residents Support Scheme to provide grants to those in real need.

*We committed to continue promoting affordable borrowing through the Credit Union and to setting up a Multiple Debts Team to support those who owed more than one debt to the Council. We were also determined to do whatever was within our power to restrict the operation of payday loan companies and betting shops.*

#### Progress this year...

- ✓ Islington became the first local authority to launch an Article 4 Direction to prevent certain shops, offices and community facilities being converted to payday loan uses without gaining planning permission from the Council. This comes into force from July 2014 and will increase our ability to challenge and restrict new payday loan companies and gambling shops
- ✓ The Resident Support Scheme has provided grants to over 3,900 vulnerable residents since its launch in April 2013. Many of those seeking support are homeless or at risk of being homeless (996), responsible for dependant children or pregnant (635), or with Mental Health issues (585). In addition to providing grants, the scheme refers people to services such as Adult Community Learning, the Credit Union, or advice around welfare benefits, employment support or energy efficiency
- ✓ A Multiple Debts Team has been set up, providing a single point of contact to assess circumstances / ability to pay and to broker affordable repayment arrangements, ensuring that rent and council tax payments can be maintained. To date, 200 residents have been helped and a further 275 contacted to offer support
- ✓ Membership of the Credit Union has continued to grow - at the end of January 2014 there were 8,568 members, an increase of 2,910 (or 51%) since March 2013
- ✓ Islington CAB (on behalf of the Islington Debt Coalition) has launched Fit Money, a financial literacy project for 16 – 24 year olds. The project is part of Inspiring Financial Confidence - a Big Lottery funded project aimed at increasing the financial literacy of people in social housing. Fit Money has worked with around 250 young people through schools, colleges, youth provision and community groups. More information is at [www.fitmoney.org.uk](http://www.fitmoney.org.uk)
- ✓ The three key advice agencies (Islington CAB, Islington Law Centre and Islington People's Rights) continue to provide much needed advice to residents in need. In the last quarter alone they dealt with enquiries from around 5,500 clients. The main issues were around welfare benefits (55%), housing (23%) and debt (20%)

# Providing secure, decent, affordable housing

Progress reported last year included delivery of more affordable homes, and supporting families in under-occupied or overcrowded households to find a more suitably sized home. This is particularly important given the government's Spare Room Subsidy, where families with one or more spare bedrooms have seen a cut in housing benefit.

*We committed to deliver more affordable homes, including new council homes, and make best use of existing stock. We were also determined to challenge the Mayor's definition of 'affordable rent' as not genuinely affordable.*

## Progress this year...

- ✓ 306 more affordable new homes have been delivered so far this year (April to December 2013), bringing the total to 1,493 since April 2011
- ✓ Islington is coordinating joint action by nine London boroughs to legally challenge the Mayor's policies on affordable rent (i.e. up to 80% of the market value) as being not truly affordable. We have been successful in negotiating social rents and lifetime tenancies with social housing providers in the borough
- ✓ We continued to ensure best use of existing stock. In the first 9 months of this year (April to December 2013):
  - 239 under-occupied households were supported to downsize (total of 637 since April 2011)
  - 123 severely overcrowded families were moved to larger homes (total of 532 since April 2011)
  - 93 properties were recovered from illegal subletting (total of 387 since April 2011)
  - 82 empty properties were brought back into use (total of 356 since April 2011)
- ✓ Our Housing Allocations Scheme has been reviewed to make it easier for young Islington residents to remain in the borough. The new scheme gives additional priority to sons and daughters of private renters, disabled sons and daughters of Islington renters, and sons and daughters of social housing tenants who are down-sizing
- ✓ The King Square Estate Development is underway, providing a new school (replacing Moreland Primary School) and housing on three sites on and adjacent to the King Square Estate EC1. Residents will be consulted at every stage of the process, including the chance to discuss design proposals with the architect
- ✓ A new development at Redbrick Estate, EC1 will see deliver around 70 new homes. An architect has been appointed and residents are involved in the development of the new designs
- ✓ An Estate Regeneration Strategy is being developed, setting out how we will ensure our estates are places where people would choose to live – not only an affordable place to live but where residents thrive and prosper

# Supporting people into work

Last year we reported on closer engagement with business and the establishment of a new Business Employment Support Team (BEST) to source local vacancies and link these to frontline services working with unemployed residents. We also increased the proportion of Council staff who are Islington residents from 23% to 33.3%.

*We committed to build on this work. But we recognised that if we are to achieve significant and sustained reductions in unemployment, we needed to work with the core employment services delivered through Jobcentre Plus and the Work Programme to ensure they understand the challenges and meet the needs of local residents.*

## Progress this year...

- ✓ Numbers of local residents on Jobseekers Allowance continue to fall - from 6,751 (Dec 12) to 5,351 (Dec 13)
- ✓ Youth unemployment has continued to fall - from 1,650 in December 2012 to 1,350 in December 2013
- ✓ 567 people have been supported into paid work through council-run programmes so far this year, bringing the total supported into work since April 2011 to 1,211 residents
- ✓ Employment support is targeted at those groups facing the greatest barriers. Of those supported into work this year, 151 were young people (aged 18-24), 249 were parents (including 186 lone parents, mostly female), and 11 had learning difficulties
- ✓ The Islington Business Board held a second *Ready to Work* event: 70 businesses attended, 74 pledges were made offering work experience, jobs, apprenticeships and other employment support. 36 businesses are now taking forward these pledges and BEST is following up with other attendees from the event
- ✓ A new Employment Services Board is in place, bringing together key partners (the Council, City & Islington College, Job Centre Plus, Work Programme providers and local business) to improve coordination and effectiveness of employment support services in Islington
- ✓ An Employment Commission has been set up to explore the challenges faced by residents. It will raise awareness, maximise local employment opportunities, and shape future employment support in Islington
- ✓ The Enterprise contract being brought back in house has resulted in a slight decrease in the overall proportion of Council staff who live in Islington – from 33.3% to 32.7%. We will continue to work towards increasing this

## Tackling crime and anti-social behaviour

A new ASB hotline was introduced in February 2012, funding secured to upgrade CCTV systems, and we piloted Neighbourhood Resolution Panels as part of a Ministry of Justice pilot, testing out the benefits of restorative justice.

*We committed to using intelligence from the ASB line to improve our response to ASB and to expand the use of Neighbourhood Resolution Panels, subject to changes in legislation, to low-level thefts and shoplifting offences.*

### Progress this year...

- ✓ The ASB line continues to provide valuable information on ASB issues – most complaints are around rowdy and inconsiderate behaviour, neighbour nuisance and noise. The improved information has enabled the Council to take action against a number of tenancy breaches, including evictions where other interventions have failed
- ✓ Calls to both Council and Police ASB lines have seen an increase. From April to December 2013 there were:
  - 10,258 ASB calls to the Council ASB reporting line (10% increase on 2012 figures)
  - 10,373 ASB calls to Police 101/999 numbers in Islington (12% increase on 2012 figures)
- ✓ 20 Acceptable Behaviour Contracts have been signed so far this year (13 of which are for people aged 18+), 10 ASB Injunctions have been served, and there have been 3 Drug Closure Orders issued
- ✓ Neighbourhood Resolution Panels have been used to deal with some neighbourhood nuisance cases. However, current legislation continues to present a barrier to using panels to address low-level crime that affect residents

## Improving children's life chances

The Fairness Commission recognised the importance of early years in shaping longer-term outcomes for children. Initiatives included promotion of early maternity care, establishing a Childcare Coalition, offering Free School Meals for all primary school pupils, promoting reading, improving educational attainment, and a new Youth Council.

*We committed to an ongoing focus on the first 21 months, rolling out delivery of multi-vitamin schemes and mental health support in children's centres to ensure a healthy start for children. We also wanted to continue to support further campaigns to promote take-up of reading, and maintain an ongoing focus on educational attainment.*

### Progress this year...

- ✓ The First 21 Months action plan is being implemented and four learning pilots are in place across the Holloway, Highbury, Finsbury and Canonbury clusters. These will explore ways to provide community maternal provision in children's centres and improve maternal and family health
- ✓ Uptake of healthy start vitamins amongst those eligible for free vitamins has increased by around 20% during the pilot and overall there has been more than a four-fold uptake in Healthy Start Vitamins
- ✓ 7 children's centres are now recognised as Healthy Children's Centres; 32 Islington schools are Healthy Schools (with a further 14 working towards this) and 11 schools are recognised as Islington 'Enhancing Healthy Schools' (a further 6 working towards this)
- ✓ The Healthy Minds project launched in all secondary schools in November 2013. It aims to raise awareness and decrease stigma of mental health problems amongst staff and pupils
- ✓ Efforts to promote reading have been extremely successful. Achievements include:
  - Launch of 'Baby's first library card' scheme with the Registrars' service to encourage new parents to get library membership for their baby
  - 850 children completed the Summer Reading Challenge, an increase of 11% on the previous year
  - Efforts have also focused on adults to enable them to support their children and improve their own outcomes. Islington won a silver award in the annual Six Book Challenge (adults read six books over six months). HMP Pentonville won a gold award with over 250 prisoners completing the challenge. We are now working with Independent Futures to encourage care leavers to participate in the adults' Six Book Challenge
  - Early Years service is working with Children's Centres to develop 'book corners' and encourage a love of reading in parents and children. Reading groups have been established in all secondary schools
- ✓ We continue to see improvements in our schools and in educational attainment:
  - 91% of Islington schools are now rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted. This puts us in the top 10% nationally and is above both the London and national averages (86% and 79% respectively)
  - 63.5% of students achieving 5 or more A-C GCSEs including Maths and English in 2013. Efforts to target under-achieving groups have paid off, with Bangladeshi and African boys being highest achieving groups
  - A Level results for Islington schools and City & Islington College were also excellent

## Giving something back

Last year we reported on the launch of the 'Here To' volunteering website, and the achievements of Islington Giving, including fundraising and a new Good Neighbours scheme in Canonbury, providing support for isolated older people. *Our priority was to develop these schemes and widen the reach of the Business for Islington Giving (BIG) Alliance.*

### Progress this year...

- ✓ Islington giving has now raised £2.5m and involved over 1,000 volunteers
- ✓ The BIG Alliance has recruited a further 6 businesses. Key achievements in 2013 include:
  - 177 business volunteers and 23 team challenges (involving 253 volunteers) supporting 55 community organisations and 5 social enterprises
  - Support to over 100 Islington jobseekers, with 43 being placed into work
  - Schools Mentoring Programme matched 64 pupils from Elizabeth Garret Anderson School (EGA) and Holloway School with mentors from local and City firms
- ✓ Here To Islington has received 75 volunteer opportunities (from 82 different local organisations) since April 2013. It aims to have 35 to 40 good opportunities at any one time targeted at residents not engaged in volunteering

## Promoting a cleaner, greener environment

Achievements reported last year included four new community spaces for growing food, introduction of a borough-wide 20mph speed limit and compulsory recycling, and energy improvements in over 17,000 homes.

*We committed to continuing with our energy efficiency improvements, setting up more gardening groups, and looking at how to tackle air pollution.*

### Progress this year...

- ✓ 693 boilers have been installed and 841 homes insulated so far this year. Priority is given to older or disabled residents: 580 vulnerable people (243 disabled people and 337 aged 60+) have had a new boiler and/or insulation this year. Over 19,000 homes have received energy efficiency improvements since April 2010
- ✓ Cavity wall insulation has been installed at 623 properties at Girdlestone Estate, and external wall insulation is being installed in 269 properties at Holly Park Estate. The insulation will reduce bills by up to £245 per year
- ✓ EU funding has been confirmed for the trans-Europe Celsius project. This will extend the Bunhill CHP heat network to supply a further 500 Council homes.
- ✓ Islington hosted a second Camden and Islington Air Quality Summit in October, attended by over 120 delegates including members of the community, local businesses, school and community organisations
- ✓ Gardening groups have been set up in Coltash Court, Tansley Close, Legion Close, Park View Estate, Camden Estate and Bemerton Estate. Six more are being planned, and discussions are underway with a further 8 estates

## Reducing health inequalities

Last year we reported on a new Health & Wellbeing Board, development of strategies to tackle health inequalities, and progress around stop smoking, teenage pregnancy, take up of breastfeeding and MMR immunisation.

*Next steps were to turn strategies into action, putting in place targeted support for those most at risk of poor health.*

### Progress this year...

- ✓ There has been a 46% reduction in early deaths from heart disease over the past 10 years. This is a faster rate of reduction compared to London (40% reduction) and England (37%)
- ✓ More smokers are completing the 4 week stop smoking course (18% dropped out in 12/13 compared to 27% in 11/12). Progress has been made with BME smokers, a priority group: 47% of those accessing stop smoking services were from BME communities (compared with 44% in 11/12) and 48% quit smoking (44% in 11/12)
- ✓ Camden & Islington NHS Foundation Trust secured funding to implement a smoke-free site at Highgate Mental Health Unit (life expectancy of those with serious mental illness is 15-20 years less than the general population)
- ✓ Thirteen active spaces are being developed across the borough, each with a dedicated activity programme to encourage children and families to be physically active. All will be completed by end of March 2014
- ✓ Weight Management Programmes for adults and for children are now in place, with 353 referrals to the Adult programme and 478 families referred to the Child Weight Management programme since January 2014
- ✓ Pilot programmes for increasing physical activity levels for people with disabilities and in patients at Highgate wing are in place