

Islington's Housing Providers' Partnership



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The purpose of the partnership agreement is to link housing association providers in Islington and Islington Council in partnership to facilitate local delivery on key strategic themes. This partnership agreement also provides corporate leadership as a strategic housing authority in delivering the **'Islington Housing Strategy'**.

The housing crisis takes many forms, and the challenges we face in Islington need solutions that fit our own local circumstances. Rough sleeping and homelessness are the most visible and damning indication of the crisis we face. But there are many other aspects, including the barriers facing young people trying to set up their first home, older people looking for better choices to help them stay living independently, families wanting somewhere stable to put down roots but living on short term tenancies in the private rented sector.

The housing crisis is as serious as it has ever been and the economic, social and environmental landscape remains unstable and unpredictable, due to the COVID pandemic, austerity measures introduced by central Government and the cost of living crisis. In such an environment the pressure on Islington Council and housing association partners is profound, and effective joint partnership working is crucial to make sure people in the Islington communities receive the housing and support they need.

Islington Council and our housing association partners share a strong common vision and purpose to provide much-needed affordable housing, prevent homelessness, and provide the highest standards of management for the maintenance and management of our homes.

The following helps to demonstrate the areas Islington Council and our housing association partners have a successful partnership arrangement already in place and this partnership agreement will help to further advance this partnership work:



For effective partnership working, Islington Council and our housing association partners need a better understanding of each other's businesses, and the operating environment in which both are working. Therefore, the Islington Housing Association Partnership Agreement between the council and Housing Association partners identifies safe, decent and affordable housing as our priority – homes to fit the needs and aspirations of current and future residents. This vision is intended to sketch out our ambitions, and to give a framework for more detailed partnership work to follow.

Although public strategic agreements are not essential, they can be very helpful in focusing partners on shared objectives and setting out delivery expectations. Hence, why this partnership agreement is important. The partnership's objectives contained within this agreement align with those of the individual organisations that form part of it. Housing Association partners would also be welcomed to attend and be represented at the council's strategic forum i.e. Children's and Adults Safeguarding Forums.

It is equally important that housing association executives are visible in Islington. This means having regular meetings with the council leader, the executive member for housing, the chief executive and the corporate director of homes and neighbourhoods. Visibility also means that the housing association chief executive intervenes personally, proactively, and effectively where things go seriously wrong – in terms of either development or local housing management. This intervention would provide demonstrable evidence to local councillors and the local media that the association is taking local issues seriously, fosters trust and helps to ensure that the 'brand reputation' of the association is maintained with the council. Housing Association representatives would also be welcomed to attend the Housing Scrutiny Committee to help to demonstrate a transparent partnership framework.

We would want to ensure the following frameworks are adopted by all partners

- Ensure vital services for tenants and leaseholders in Islington are easy to access, and responsive to residents' individual circumstances.
- To ensure a consistent level of capital investment and asset management into homes in Islington.
- As part of being locally accountable, to be able to provide transparent and measurable information at borough level about levels of service and investment.
- Work with all partners to ensure the needs of vulnerable and multiple complex needs residents are addressed with statutory agencies.
- Promoting local employment opportunities and investing in the local economy of Islington
- Promoting higher management standards, following national best practice and shared learning.

This partnership agreement is a statement on how Islington Council and its housing association partners can work in partnership to improve residents' individual and community well being.

We know we can't do this alone, and some of these issues could need a twenty-year effort to really resolve. But we know we will only succeed with the help, support and commitment of local communities, and housing associations.

Housing plays a central part in people's lives. We all need and deserve a safe, decent and affordable home to provide the stable foundation for everything else that we want to achieve for ourselves and our families, a home that gives us the secure, warm, dry haven we all need. When we fail to provide that, the impacts on individuals and society as a whole can be severe and long lasting, as we see all too clearly in our work to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.

To give our children the best start in life, we know that good housing with room for families to grow, and access to green spaces to play, helps to give kids the healthy and stable start that sees them starting school ready to learn, and better placed to do well as they progress. We also know that our care experienced young people need to have stable, secure accommodation to reach their potential. Our economic future depends on keeping and attracting the people who will make Islington a place of ideas and invention, a modern economy that draws in investment, visitors and talent. We need our housing offer to be an affordable and attractive one – to provide an excellent quality of life, connected to education and employment, in neighbourhoods all across Islington that our future generations will want to make their home.

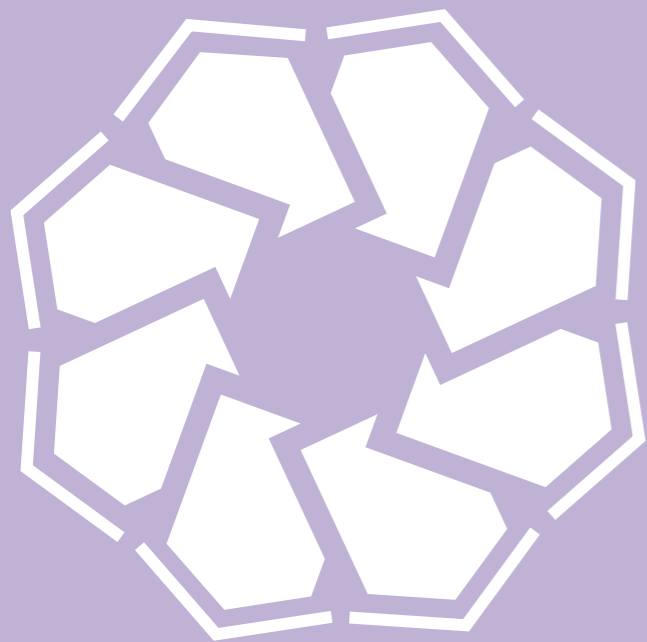
Over 17,500 properties in Islington are home to housing association residents, and we have 48 housing association partners who provide homes and neighbourhoods for a significant proportion of Islington's residents. It is therefore clearly important that the Council and housing associations work in partnership to deliver the best housing outcomes we can for our residents and communities.

For many of us, the right home can enable us to live healthier, more independent lives for longer than would otherwise be possible. Health inequalities within Islington are often reinforced by poor quality housing, which we need to address if we are to achieve our ambitions to deliver a radical upgrade in the health of Islington residents. Providing specialist supported housing will be an important contribution, but well-designed mainstream homes need to be at the heart of our approach. These need to be homes Islington residents can afford – our aspirations for inclusive growth, bringing the benefits of economic development to everyone in Islington, will be frustrated if the cost of finding the right home in the right place is out of reach for too many of us. That includes the cost of keeping homes warm – quality, modern, properly insulated and energy efficient homes are cheaper to run as well as helping reduce carbon emissions and being better suited to deal with our changing climate.

All partnerships need to be underpinned by a common understanding and common purpose. No one partner has all the answers to everything and people need to follow as well as lead, therefore, this partnership agreement sets out a challenging partnership arrangement going forward.

A driver for change is focused on listening to the residents who live in affordable housing in Islington and acting effectively where their concerns are greatest. We wish to ensure through this partnership agreement to enable residents having sufficient information on performance data, complaints are dealt with effectively; and that resident engagement and scrutiny measures are made more effective. The Council shares those concerns and believes that if these issues are addressed, it will provide the platform for wider community wellbeing outcomes the Council and its partners are seeking to deliver.

This is why our ambition to be a world leader in delivering new net zero carbon homes alongside finding ways to accelerate retrofitting of our existing homes is so important.



Our partnership vision is:

- ✿ Islington council wishes to be seen as the best council in England and to achieve this a strong and effective partnership is required with our housing association partners.
- ✿ That our existing homes receive the investment they need to meet and exceed modern requirements for their building safety, security, warmth and physical accessibility. This includes retrofitting our existing homes to meet our ambitions for net zero carbon homes.
- ✿ Ensure all properties are free from mould and damp.
- ✿ Work in partnership with the council to address the challenges residents face with the cost of living crisis.
- ✿ Fulfil all areas of our corporate parenting duty by treating the care experienced within our homes as we would our own children this includes areas such as, understanding that care experienced young people may need a different response due to their past trauma, employment opportunities within the housing association, assisting through liaison with the leaving care service when residents are in rent arrears or at risk of eviction and making all attempts to resolve situations.
- ✿ Those homes will be part of neighbourhoods of choice, connected to economic opportunities and strategic infrastructure, and offering an excellent quality of life for all parts of the community.
- ✿ All partners are confident that our homes will be well managed and safe, decent and affordable.
- ✿ People in housing need, homeless or at risk of becoming homeless can quickly access social housing or other affordable housing options so they can retain their place in Islington.
- ✿ That no-one will need to sleep rough in Islington.
- ✿ We consistently deliver the right homes in the right places, providing the number and mix of new homes for the future needs of Islington.
- ✿ The new homes we build enhance the choice, affordability, quality and variety of housing available in neighbourhoods, and are accompanied by social and other infrastructure residents need and the existing community to thrive, including schools, health facilities and green spaces.
- ✿ That the quality and design of new homes means we can better match the housing supply to the future housing needs and incomes of all of Islington's residents.
- ✿ We aim to ensure the construction industry in Islington is a centre of excellence and innovation.
- ✿ We will benchmark across the partnership to drive service improvements for the benefit of residents.
- ✿ We will aim to be in the top quartile for all national performance indicators published by the regulator of social housing.
- ✿ All partners to contribute positively to community safety and anti-social behaviour work.
- ✿ Listen and respect residents' views. But more importantly respond to these views.
- ✿ Respect diversity and promote equality of opportunity for all sections of society.
- ✿ Be transparent and honest with everyone.
- ✿ Respond to elected member and MP enquiries within 10 working days.
- ✿ Openly share best practice or learning insights/examples across the local partnership.
- ✿ Improve resident engagement in order to empower residents.
- ✿ We will work together to prevent homelessness.
- ✿ Participate in refugee resettlement programmes to ensure that this offer also includes those displaced by war and needing sanctuary.
- ✿ Work in partnership with the council to develop housing first across Islington.
- ✿ Work in partnership to develop best practice in fire risk assessment and building safety.
- ✿ Contribute to the development and implementation of the housing strategy and the homelessness prevention and rough sleeping strategy.
- ✿ Commit to meeting the needs of all vulnerable tenants.
- ✿ Work in partnership to deliver the council's care values.
- ✿ Ensure 100% of new build lettings and 95% of subsequent lettings are allocated through a partnership nominations agreement.

If you would like this information in another language or reading format, such as Braille, large print, audio or Easy Read, please contact 020 7527 2000.

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