

Towards a Fairer Islington: Annual Report 2015-16

Progress in delivering the Corporate Plan (2015-19)



The Islington Commitment

We're determined to make Islington fairer. To create a place where everyone, whatever their background, has the opportunity to reach their potential and enjoy a good quality of life.

To achieve this, we have committed to:

- Building more council housing and supporting private renters
- Helping residents who are out of work to find the right job
- Helping residents cope with the rising cost of living
- Providing residents with good services on a tight budget
- Making Islington a place where our residents have a good quality of life

This report summarises progress and some of the major achievements in the first year of delivering the Islington Commitment



We said we would:

Build more council housing and support private renters

We've made good progress in improving access to and quality of affordable homes in Islington. We've focused our efforts on four main areas. Key achievements in 2015-16 include:

Increasing the supply of affordable homes

- ⇒ 241 new affordable homes built by housing associations and the council in 2015-16, including
 - 18 new council homes at Parkhurst Road and a further 20 council homes in Lyon Street (for Over 55s)
 - Harrington Court on Hornsey Rise, developed by London and Quadrant, delivered 100% affordable housing: 14 homes for social rent homes and 14 shared ownership
 - The Lexicon building on City Road Basin, developed by Affinity Sutton: 37 homes for social rent, 70 shared ownership
- ⇒ Forecast to develop 460 new affordable homes in 2016-17 and on track for delivering 2,000 new affordable homes by 2019

Preventing homelessness

- ⇒ Reduced the number of households accepted as homeless – from 396 (2014-15) to 375 (2015-16) - third lowest in London
- ⇒ 33% of lets in 2015-16 went to homeless families
- ⇒ Permanently housed over 1,000 households and prevented a further 520 families from becoming homeless
- ⇒ Numbers in temporary accommodation are third lowest in London – and we've reduced costs by placing fewer people in the most expensive nightly booked temporary accommodation
- ⇒ Led the way in North London by agreeing the maximum rate we are prepared to pay for temporary accommodation

Ensuring effective management of council housing

- ⇒ Improved the efficiency of our Housing Repairs service: 85% (42,500) of repairs reported in 2015-16 were fixed first time
- ⇒ Launched an online Repairs form making it easier to report repairs
- ⇒ Assisted 78 households with their overcrowding
- ⇒ Supported 179 under-occupied households to downsize
- ⇒ Ensured speedy re-letting of void properties to help vulnerable families: average re-let time is now less than 3 weeks

Improving housing conditions for private tenants

- ⇒ Taken action against rogue landlords resulting in:
 - 8 prosecutions, including for failure to license Homes of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) – with fines imposed by the court totalling £11,450
 - 188 enforcement notices served
 - 374 private sector homes improved
- ⇒ Commenced an audit of all lettings agents in the borough and taken action against those who are breaking the law including:
 - Issued 7 £5,000 fines to agents not members of the Redress Scheme
 - Issued 5 fines (ranging from £2,000 to £8,000) to agents who were not displaying landlord and tenant fees or other failures
- ⇒ Launched our own lettings agency (Islington Lettings) to provide private rented properties at genuinely affordable rates: 10 properties let to families in need. Islington Lettings was awarded Best Landlord Services (Local Authorities and Not for Profit Organisations) at the UK Landlord Accreditation Partnership awards in March



We said we would:

Help people find the right job

In 2014, the Islington Employment Commission set out clear recommendations for improving employment support in Islington to help more people move out of poverty and into work. Over the past year we've made great progress against each of the four priorities identified by the Commission. Key achievements include:

Providing employment support for those who need it most

- ⇒ Supported 1,150 unemployed residents into paid work (over half were long term unemployed). This included:
 - 350 young people (18-25)
 - 200 people with a disability or long-term health condition
 - 385 parents (many of whom were lone parents)
- ⇒ Launched Get Set for Work – providing 25 work placements in the Council to gain experience and build confidence to get a job
- ⇒ Delivered adult learning courses to 2,300 to develop skills for work – and Ofsted inspection rated our provision as Good

Creating change for the next generation

- ⇒ Increased the rate of young people staying in education post 16:
 - 96.7% of Year 11s from Islington schools moved into education or training (compared to 94.4% last year) and NEETs rate halved to 2.2%
- ⇒ Widespread work with schools to promote apprenticeships and work:
 - Programme of Apprenticeship Assemblies and events across all Islington secondary schools reached 1,800 pupils
 - Over 500 business volunteers engaged with 2,860 young people in our schools to provide careers information and employability support
- ⇒ 104 people placed into apprenticeships including 44 in the Council
- ⇒ Held Public Sector Apprenticeships Event in National Apprenticeships Week

Supporting employers to recruit locally

- ⇒ Launched Islington Aspires – a website for local employers wanting to offer employment support to residents and schools
- ⇒ 120 employers engaged with the Islington Offer – resulting in offers of:
 - 22 Saturday jobs (plus another 10 from Arsenal in the pipeline)
 - 150 Apprenticeships
 - 27 carved jobs
 - 320 part time job opportunities
- ⇒ 70 employers engaged in activities to support young people, including work with schools
- ⇒ Proactive engagement with 30 Construction employers – resulting in jobs and apprenticeships

Lobbying government, influencing policy

- ⇒ Successfully lobbied government for greater local control of employment and skills resources to ensure we meet local need. In November, the chancellor announced, as part of his Spending Review, devolution for London of employment support for long term unemployed and those with health conditions / disabilities
- ⇒ Launched the Islington Wellbeing and Work Partnership with NHS and DWP to pilot practical ways of linking employment and health support to inform national policy and provision. Includes:
 - Working Better – piloting employment support in GP surgeries
 - Working Capital – piloting intensive support to ESA claimants who failed to get a job through the Work Programme



We said we would:

Help residents cope with the rising cost of living

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation reported that living costs in the UK have risen dramatically, by 25% in 5 years. This is having a severe impact on our residents, many of whom are struggling to cope on very low incomes. Over the past year we've:

Supported families to cope with everyday costs

- ⇒ 92% of Nursery and Primary school pupils are taking up Free School Meals, compared to 62% when Islington's Universal Free School Meals scheme started in March 2010
- ⇒ Supported 329 Islington students to stay in education post 16 through our post-16 bursaries scheme – aimed at those facing the most significant barriers to staying in education post 16 (e.g. children in care, disabled, those on income support)
- ⇒ Held over 200 free or low cost events for children and young people as part of our Summer 2015 Heatwave festival

Helped people struggling with debt

- ⇒ Agreed new planning policy to limit the number of payday lenders and betting shops in areas where there is already a high concentration
- ⇒ Supported residents in crisis through our Residents Support Scheme (with Cripplegate Foundation): in 2015-16 we made 4,308 awards totalling almost £2.2million – to help with rent, council tax, and essential household items
- ⇒ Funded free independent advice through good quality local voluntary sector organisations such as Citizens Advice to advise residents on issues around finances, debt housing and benefits: the CAB alone saw over 5,000 residents in 2015-16

Reduced energy bills

- ⇒ Saved residents an estimated £320,870 in energy costs in 2015-16, through Warm Homes Discount, Debt Relief and Energy Doctor visits
- ⇒ Between November 2013 and December 2015, 3,236 households have signed up to the £140 Warm Homes Discount, bringing over £860,000 into the borough to help tackle fuel poverty
- ⇒ 2,475 SHINE referrals in 2015 leading to 10,788 interventions – the SHINE network has saved residents over £3 million since its launch
- ⇒ Commenced construction work of the Bunhill Phase 2 project - which will provide cheaper energy to a further 500 council homes
- ⇒ Commissioned feasibility studies into four further decentralised energy schemes, including a potential new heat network around the Harvist Estate in Highbury West ward
- ⇒ Commenced the Smart Energy project (using Innovate UK funding via the GLA) to upgrade the controls for Bunhill 2 and install smart controls in residents' homes on the Redbrick Estate- will further improve the efficiency of heating across the Bunhill heat network, and increase residents' control over their heating
- ⇒ Took advantage of fall in utility prices in winter 15/16 to buy gas and electricity for the Council, leisure centres, schools and communal housing for all 2016/17 – has enabled communal heating and hot water charges to be reduced by 18% or £2 a week.



We said we would:

Provide residents with good services on a tight budget

We're undertaking an ambitious programme of change across the council, to ensure we can continue to deliver high quality services for residents despite year on year cuts to our funding. Over the past year we have:

Made it easier to access council services online

- ⇒ Improved our online offer to residents:
 - Increased the range of services available on our website: Business Rates, Council Tax, Registrar appointments, School Admissions, Street Environment services and, most recently, Housing Repairs are now online
 - Re-developed our website to make it accessible via smart phones and tablets – key services are now on the new site, with others moving over in the coming year
- ⇒ Seen an increase in digital transactions as a result:
 - 147,160 digital transactions in 2015-16, a 23% increase on 2014-15
 - 80,000 visits to our 'Say I Do' website which allows people to book and arrange their wedding with us
- ⇒ Developed a Digital Inclusion Strategy to help people get online

Generated new income

- ⇒ Set up a trading company – Islington Company (ICo) - to generate income
- ⇒ Secured income from a range of sources to fund services including:
 - £1m Skills Funding Agency to provide adult learning courses
 - £3.9m New Homes Bonus and a further £159,000 from Jobcentre Plus to fund employment support for those facing significant barriers into work
 - £2.7m TfL funding to improve local cycling routes in Islington
- ⇒ Received £18.4m Section 106 / £3m Community Infrastructure Levy from developers, plus 118 jobs (including 32 apprenticeships) for local residents
- ⇒ Brought in additional income through selling our expertise, including £630,000 through our Legal Team for training, conveyancing and legal support

Maximised income collection

- ⇒ 100% of rents due in 2015-16 were collected – for both council and Partners for Islington managed homes
- ⇒ 96.5% of Council Tax was collected
- ⇒ 99.1% of Business Rates were collected
- ⇒ Our Legal Team set up a new procedure to recover historic debt through Right To Buy applications
- ⇒ Our Attack the Arrears campaign recovered £1.1million Council Tax arrears (to end May 2016) that would otherwise have been written off as bad debt, The predicted cost of the project is £350,000

Provided efficient, high quality core services

- ⇒ Agreed a shared ICT service with Camden and Haringey which will result in an improved service and achieve £2million savings per borough per annum
- ⇒ Continued to deliver an efficient refuse and recycling service – minimising the number of missed collections to around 400 per month (a fraction of over 2 million collections we make per month)
- ⇒ Launched our Clean Islington app to enable residents to instantly report fly-tipping and other street cleanliness issues: over 4,000 reports to date
- ⇒ Over 1 million visits to our libraries. We're making better use of libraries – offering support to get online as part of our Digital Inclusion Strategy
- ⇒ Almost 2.4million visits to our leisure centres in the past year. Ironmonger Road Baths was accredited as Excellent under the Inclusive Fitness Initiative, a measure for disabled sports facilities – only 3 facilities across the country have achieved this



We said we would:

Make Islington a place where our residents have a good quality of life

Tackling youth crime and gang activity is a priority if young people are to achieve their best and residents are to feel safe. Ensuring the best start in life and good achievement at school is a key factor in improving outcomes for future generations, whilst we need to continue to provide support for the most vulnerable in our society, to ensure they have as good a quality of life as possible. Progress in 2015-16 includes:

Improving community safety

- ⇒ Launched a new Youth Crime Strategy setting out how we will tackle crime, anti-social behaviour and gang activity – and agreed an additional £500,000 to help those most at risk of turning to gangs and crime
- ⇒ Established an Integrated Gangs Team, based in the Police Station, bringing together the Police, Council and voluntary sector services to work with the most prolific gang offenders
- ⇒ Launched a campaign to encourage reporting of Hate Crime - working with the Police to ensure more cases result in positive outcomes for victims
- ⇒ Recruited a Clinical Psychologist to support Housing and Police officers deal with victims and perpetrators with mental health issues

Supporting vulnerable residents and carers

- ⇒ Increased the proportion of older and vulnerable residents supported to live independently:
 - 89.2% of those discharged from hospital into our Re-ablement Services were living independently within 3 months compared to 83.9% last year
 - 81.2% of service users with a learning disability are now living in the community compared to 78.2% same period last year
- ⇒ Reduction in permanent admissions to nursing or residential care: 106 in 2015-16 compared to 125 the previous year
- ⇒ Islington has committed to ringfence funding previously paid through the Independent Living Fund (which the government has scrapped), to support our most vulnerable residents to continue to live independently

Helping children to achieve their potential

- ⇒ Improved take up and reach of our Early Years services:
 - 91% of families with a child under 5 are now registered with one of our children's centres (up from 88% the previous year)
 - Over 700 free places for 2 year olds have been taken up by eligible children (low income families, special needs, disabled, children in care)
- ⇒ Achievement at the end of the Early Years' Foundation stage has improved
- ⇒ All secondary schools, nurseries, pupil referral units and maintained special schools in Islington were judged as good or better by Ofsted in their most recent inspection. The proportion of primary schools judged good or better by Ofsted remains above national average
- ⇒ Pupils are making good progress in our schools: between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 (i.e. age 11-16) the proportion of pupils making expected progress in English is 7th best nationally, whilst Maths is above national
- ⇒ Improved outcomes for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds:
 - Islington CLA (children looked after) have achieved their best ever recorded outcomes; performing above national CLA levels
 - Islington schools are 6th best in the country for the proportion of disadvantaged pupils achieving 5 GCESs at A*-C grades including English and Maths
 - The recently published Social Mobility Index ranked Islington fifth best out of all 324 local authorities in England in terms of social mobility for disadvantaged children
- ⇒ 815 families supported through Phase 1 of our Stronger Families pilot achieved improved outcomes, with 81 adults supported into work



We said we would:

Make Islington a place where our residents have a good quality of life

Helping residents to lead healthy lives is a key part of ensuring a good quality of life. Our Public Health team are working closely with Adults and Children's Services, and the NHS, to deliver a range of prevention and recovery services. We also recognise and support the played by local voluntary and community sector organisations in delivering activities which bring the community together and support the most vulnerable.






Helping residents to live healthy, independent lives

- ⇒ In October 2015 responsibility for commissioning health visiting services for children aged 0-5 was transferred from NHS England to local authorities:
 - Early results show that 95% of new birth visits were conducted in the first 14 days
 - Islington is a pilot for delivering the integrated 2 year review, undertaken jointly with early year's education providers
- ⇒ Over 5,300 people with mental health issues supported through our Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme
- ⇒ Redesigned our adult health improvement services – smoking, weight management, exercise on referral and community provision on NHS Health Checks – to focus on supporting residents to stay healthy, thus reducing demand and escalation of need for future health and social care services. New services are being procured and will roll out from April 2016
- ⇒ Led the procurement of new open access sexual health services for North Central London councils (Islington, Barnet, Haringey, Camden, Hackney and City of London): more people will be able to access services on-line, such as to order self-sampling kits for Sexually Transmitted Infections, without the need to go to a clinic, and a more integrated model of sexual health services which will cover sexually transmitted infections and contraceptive needs as part of a more holistic service

Funding community projects to improve quality of life

- ⇒ Provided core grants totalling £1.1million to over 40 key voluntary and community sector organisations who provide valuable services for residents
- ⇒ Allocated £450,000 to local community groups and projects through our two small grants schemes:
 - Islington Community Chest (£200,000) administered by Cripplegate Foundation
 - Local Initiatives Fund (£240,000) for ward councillors to fund local schemes and community groups within their area (£15,000 per ward)
- ⇒ Over 180 groups received much needed funding through these schemes – often covering core costs to enable them to continue to deliver vital services to the community
- ⇒ Projects and initiatives funded through ICC and LIF in 2015-16 included:
 - Lunch clubs and activities for older people
 - Educational support, training, and mentoring and activities for young people
 - Arts and music activities
 - Sports and fitness activities
 - Cultural activities and celebrations
 - Support and activity for specific communities
 - Projects to support disabled people, those with learning difficulties, those recovering from addiction or bereavement
 - Festivals, street parties and events
 - Community gardening projects

Delivering our Commitments: Priorities and challenges for the year ahead include

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Deliver 460 new affordable homes scheduled for 2016-17 ▪ Continue to drive improvement in our repairs service and encourage more tenants to report online ▪ Complete our audit of letting agents in Islington and take action against those landlords and agents who are breaking the law ▪ Details of how the Housing and Planning Act will be implemented will become clear over the coming months. We'll continue to do our best to negotiate the best deal for Islington residents. The Act will require local authorities to sell off high value properties which will reduce genuinely affordable housing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continued implementation of Employment Commission – piloting and monitoring impact of intensive support to those on sickness benefits ▪ Maximise opportunities from local developers including jobs / training negotiated as part of the City North development in Finsbury Park ▪ Align council apprenticeships with academic year so that opportunities are available at the time young people need to make decisions ▪ Launch new ACL website to attract and support more adult learners. Input into and influence wider review of skills provision across London ▪ Influencing national policy: The decision by government for London to have devolved responsibility for employment support for vulnerable groups provides a real opportunity. Islington will continue to play a leading role in shaping the devolution deal and push for wider devolution of employment and skills support
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Launch our own Energy brand, offering affordable gas and electricity tariffs to help lift the poorest residents out of fuel poverty ▪ Develop new heating networks, subject to findings of four feasibility studies currently being undertaken, and complete Phase 2 of Bunhill scheme ▪ Continue to deliver the Smart Energy Project (due for completion 2018) improving the ability to control heating and energy use in council homes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Make more services available online to make it easier for residents to transact with us, whilst providing face to face support for those who most need it ▪ Implement our Digital Inclusion Strategy to ensure that no one gets left behind - including recruiting Digital Champions to help residents get online ▪ Implement the shared ICT service between Islington, Camden and Haringey Councils, which will deliver savings of £2 million per year for the council ▪ Introduce a new virtual voucher system for Parking ▪ Continue to pilot use of bin sensors to improve waste recycling, and introduce new road and pavement sweeping vehicles to improve street cleanliness
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strong focus upon tackling youth crime, gangs, hate crime and domestic violence ▪ Address the variation between schools in terms of both attainment and progress – so that pupils get the best outcomes, whichever school they attend ▪ Reduce Primary absence and fixed term exclusions – attendance should at least 96% in every school ▪ Deliver more support to families with complex needs through Phase 2 of our Stronger Families programme ▪ Implement new contracts for adult health improvement services including smoking, weight management, exercise on referral, sexual health services ▪ The Autumn Statement confirmed further reductions to the public health grant and the removal of the ring-fence for the grant beyond 2017-18. This will provide a real challenge in terms of delivering major public health schemes that help promote healthy living for our residents