

We work together for a more equal Islington

FOR A MORE
EQUAL FUTURE



**Workforce Strategy
2026-30**



ISLINGTON

**This strategy is a
commitment to
how we work and
how we lead.**

Our workforce strategy

Islington is an amazing place, full of creativity, energy, difference, and diversity – and our workforce should reflect that.

We need to ensure that we are relentlessly focused on our residents; working closely with them, listening deeply to them, working in places that matter to them. It is more important than ever that we are driven by our purpose of working together for a more equal future.

We know that expectations of local government continue to evolve, we face new opportunities and challenges, we work with increasing complexity and demand, and this creates, at times, uncertainty, risk and fluidity in how we respond and work.

We need to be an organisation that is welcoming, grounded and spirited in our approach. An organisation that is led by its values of collaborative,

ambitious, resourceful and empowering. We need to be well led, well run, providing opportunities for colleagues to grow, to flourish and to thrive. We need to design services around outcomes using robust evidence and data, with an understanding of local needs and local voices.

We need to operate across systems, we need to make complex matters simple and most importantly we need to connect with residents, councillors, partners with empathy and compassion. We need to be able to use our expertise to lead across services and to demand change for our residents, we need to use our resources differently and use data to inform our thinking.

We need to be transparent and open about our priorities and our constraints, clear about expectations and deliver high quality services. We



must be accountable to those we serve and learn from our experiences, from feedback and from our mistakes. We need to use our resources to greatest effect and be grounded in what matters most for our residents and communities.

Put simply, we need to be confident, accountable, focused and compassionate public servants. These principles are not optional things we do when they're convenient. We want Islington to be a place that cares and acts with humanity, where colleagues feel supported, empowered, and respected, and where we hold ourselves to the highest of standards in how we behave, in how we treat each other and the people we serve.

This strategy relies on all of us playing

our part to deliver our purpose of working together for a more equal future by delivering through our values. We want a council where colleagues have the skills, confidence and support they need to do their best work every day.

It has been shaped by feedback from our Colleague Survey, from colleagues, from our trade unions alongside workforce data, insight and the changes needed to modernise how we work and deliver our Corporate Plan.

Over the next four years, we will strengthen leadership, build capability, and create a more consistent, inclusive and high-performing council, one that enables colleagues to learn, grow and succeed, and one that delivers continued impact for our residents.



What do we need for the future?

This strategy sets out not only what we will do, but what we need from all colleagues to ensure we are delivering our purpose of working together for a more equal future.

Every colleague has a role in how we work, lead and respond to change to deliver resident focused services for our communities.

We know that our colleagues are committed to delivering for our residents and take pride in their work. We also know we need to be more consistent as an organisation, so that our colleagues have a shared experience, with clear direction and set of priorities, expectations and ways of working. This must be supported by simpler systems and processes that apply to all. This will reduce duplication, improve efficiency and make navigating our organisation

easier. It will ensure we use our resources effectively and enable us to respond to increasing complexity and changing demands.

We know with increasing expectations of local government, with new opportunities and challenges we need to ensure we help colleagues focus on what matters most. We need to simplify complexity and guide our colleagues through change and what it might mean for them. We also need to recognise we might not always agree but that decisions need to be transparent, shared and respected. We need to couple this with manageable workloads and focused meetings to maximise the use of our time. Leaders and managers need to understand their boundaries for decision-making and escalation and feel empowered to lead consistently and support their teams.



Respect, inclusion and belonging are important to us. Our differences and our diversity are value. We know psychological safety matters. We need to ensure we have trusted and accessible ways to raise concerns and confidence these will be addressed appropriately. Inclusion, equity and respect should be modelled and reinforced consistently, with leaders and teams holding each other to account. Workplace adjustments and support for health-related needs should be easy to understand and access, and kept up to date.

Colleagues value practical, relevant learning, supported by managers, with protected time and clearer career pathways and succession planning. Reflecting the evolving technology, we need opportunities to build digital, Artificial Intelligence and data skills within our organisation. We also need stronger leadership capability, where colleagues can self-serve and act with confidence with matters they have responsibility for. We need to further develop leadership, performance and change management skills, and to do that in a way that builds empathy and compassion in all that we do.

Our Four Pillars

These four pillars have been created to focus our workforce strategy. They outline why each are important and what we will deliver.

1. Delivering great work
2. Inclusion and belonging
3. Skills for today and tomorrow
4. Wellbeing, resilience and working safely

1. Delivering great work

We need colleagues to focus on what matters most, improving productivity and reducing duplication through clear priorities, consistent ways of working and systems that support delivery. Our work needs to be closer to our residents, in places that mean something to our communities. Work will be well organised, with realistic expectations and clear communication, so colleagues can deliver for their residents. This includes working deeply with residents, effectively with partners, and bringing together people, insight and resources across the council.

By 2030, our workforce will feel confident in how they work, led by our values, and make decisions, with greater consistency and a focus on outcomes for our residents. Colleagues will spend more time engaging and delivering for residents, in communities and neighbourhoods, working in a way that reflects the needs of our local communities, with less time navigating processes, and take pride in delivering great work every day.

To deliver consistent, high-quality and efficient services for residents, we will:

- Strengthen our leadership capability through a defined leadership and management development offer, whilst streamlining our leadership and management layers. Leaders will set clear priorities, make visible decisions and support their teams effectively.
- Launch and embed new colleague behaviours to support our CARE values, based on the feedback of more than 1,600 colleagues, with clear expectations and accountability for how these are demonstrated by everyone.
- Review priority systems, processes and policies to make them simpler, easier to use and in reducing duplication. They will apply to all and help remove barriers, improve efficiency and increase productivity.
- Implement evolved corporate and manager-led communication, in line with our Communications and Engagement Strategy, to ensure consistent and joined up messages. This will help colleagues understand priorities, decisions and changes and what they mean in practice for our residents.
- Reinforce our frameworks for decision-making, delegation, escalation and engagement so teams can make decisions and are accountable for good governance and outcomes.
- Review our workplaces and our workstyles to ensure they support our priorities and enable us to work closely with our residents with compassion and purpose.
- Focus on shared resident and place-based outcomes leading to strengthened working across services, with our partners and with our residents.

2. Inclusion and belonging

We are building a workplace where respect and inclusion is experienced consistently, with clear expectations for behaviour. This means identifying and removing barriers and addressing discrimination. This also means creating an accessible and inclusive environment where colleagues can be themselves and speak up, with confidence that concerns will be taken seriously and acted on. We know colleagues experience work differently depending on their backgrounds, circumstances and identity and we

need a consistent approach to support and celebrate this.

By 2030, colleagues will experience consistent inclusion and belonging in practice, supported by inclusive leadership, clear accountability, and access to the support and adjustments they need. Colleagues will trust that decisions, behaviours and opportunities are applied consistently, and that inequality in how people experience work is recognised and addressed.

To create a workplace where everyone feels respected, included and listened to, we will:

- Align the new colleague behaviours within accessible guidance, policies and procedures that are applied consistently across the council, to create inclusive, consistent expectations in how we all work.
- Strengthen and embed inclusive leadership behaviours and accountability, so that all leaders and managers are creating supportive and inclusive environments.
- Provide safe, accessible and trusted ways for colleagues to raise concerns, feedback and challenge constructively, and ensure concerns are responded to consistently and transparently.
- Continue to improve access to workplace adjustments and health and wellbeing related support, making processes clearer so colleagues can get the support they need quickly.
- Continue to work with colleague forums and trade unions to shape and improve our approach to inclusion and belonging.
- Identify and remove barriers in our workplaces, systems and processes to support inclusion, accessibility and belonging across all services, enabling colleagues to engage and work with our residents effectively.

3. Skills for today and tomorrow

We will support colleagues to build the skills, behaviours and confidence needed for the future. We need to ensure that we are relentlessly focused on our residents. As expectations of us continue to evolve, we know we need to be equipped to work with uncertainty, risk and complexity. To support we know learning will need to be accessible, practical and supported by managers, with clear pathways for development, progression, succession planning and leadership.

By 2030, our workforce will have the skills needed to adapt to change, including digital, data and future service needs, that enable us to deliver great work for our residents and present a grounded, spirited and welcoming face to the council. Colleagues will be supported to grow their careers at Islington, with stronger internal progression and a more diverse pipeline of future leaders.

To build the skills, behaviours and confidence to deliver now and in the future, we will:

- Review and strengthen our learning and development offer so it is accessible, relevant and aligned to current and future organisational needs.
- Equip leaders and managers to develop their teams and services through coaching, feedback and performance conversations, with clear expectations, tools and guidance.
- Introduce an approach to identify the skills needed to respond and adapt to future change, including legislative, service and workforce changes.
- Develop digital, data and AI skills across the organisation, with clear guidance on responsible and practical use in day-to-day work.
- Create stronger career pathways, job families and progression routes to support career development.
- Introduce a structured approach to succession planning and talent development to strengthen internal progression and build a more diverse pipeline of future leaders.
- Expand apprenticeships and local employment pathways to support workforce development and reflect our communities.
- Identify and remove barriers to recruitment, progression and development so all colleagues can access opportunities to build their careers at Islington.
- Strengthen organisational capability to manage change by providing consistent tools, methods and support for managers and leaders.
- Build relational working skills and capability to work in partnership with our residents, colleagues, voluntary, community and faith sectors to use data and insight so colleagues can work in a preventative, more proactive way.

4. Wellbeing, resilience and working safely

We know that high-quality work supports physical and mental wellbeing, and we will continue to build a health promoting workplace where colleagues feel supported, with a sense of purpose and belonging. We want colleagues to do their job well, with appropriate workloads and supportive environments, particularly during periods of change. This includes strengthening resilience, supporting colleagues to adapt, learn and respond to challenges in a way

that works for them and meets the council's needs.

By 2030, colleagues need to be able to sustain both high performance and wellbeing over time, supported by clear expectations, early support and consistent management. Wellbeing, resilience and working safely will be embedded in how we work day to day, so colleagues feel supported to be resilient and maintain their wellbeing.

To support colleagues to sustain wellbeing and performance over time, we will:

- Embed consistent conversations between managers and colleagues to support early discussion of workload, wellbeing and working safely.
- Take a preventative, safety-based approach to wellbeing and health and safety by identifying risks and challenges early, acting before they escalate and using data, insight and feedback to target support and interventions.
- Improve work design by linking wellbeing to clear roles, priorities and realistic expectations, so colleagues can perform well consistently.
- Keep policies, guidance and ways of working under regular review to reflect new evidence, research and best practice in health, safety and wellbeing.
- Strengthen how we learn from health and safety incidents and feedback to improve how we support wellbeing and safe working environments.
- Improve communication about wellbeing and health and safety support, so colleagues understand what is available and how to access support.

In the next 12–24 months

We will focus on the
following actions:

1. Delivering great work

- Review our job architecture, including job families and management layers, to support clearer structures, consistent ways of working and career pathways.
- Launch and embed our Purpose into Action colleague behaviours to support our CARE values, based on the feedback of more than 1,600 colleagues.
- Review our workstyles to ensure they support our priorities, and enable us to work closely with our residents with compassion and purpose.

2. Inclusion and belonging

- Deliver and analyse our next all-colleague survey, providing leaders and managers with clear insight to shape local people plans.
- Review, update and embed consistent use of policies, procedures and guidance relating to behaviour, inclusion and belonging, ensuring they are clear, accessible and applied consistently.
- Design and deliver the next stage of leadership and management development, including tools and support for managers to lead consistently and demonstrate inclusive behaviours.

3. Skills for today and tomorrow

- Develop and implement an approach to talent development and succession planning, aligned to workforce planning priorities.
- Expand apprenticeship roles across the council to strengthen entry routes and future talent pipelines.
- Refresh our approach to attracting candidates, improving recruitment outcomes and supporting employment opportunities for local residents.
- Design and deliver targeted learning and development to build partnership working, co-production skills and the use of local insight, aligned to priority service areas and neighbourhood pilots.

4. Wellbeing, resilience and working safely

- Deliver identified health and safety improvements, using data to target support and take a preventative approach to working safely.
- Develop and implement targeted, evidence-based interventions to improve wellbeing and reduce absence, focusing on prevention and early intervention.

How we will measure success

**These actions will
be monitored and
we will keep track
of progress using:**

- Our delivery plan
- Data, trends and feedback from the colleague survey, engagement activity, Trade Unions and colleague forums
- Workforce data contained in our workforce report, such as recruitment and retention, employee relations casework, progression and representation
- Regular updates to the Corporate Workforce Board.



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