







Delivering impact

Social value in Islington's Affordable Workspaces

April 2020 - April 2022





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Introduction

In 2011, Islington's Fairness Commission reported that the borough is a place of stark inequalities, 'two Islingtons' where acute deprivation still exists side by side, and sometimes, on the same street with extraordinary wealth.

On the one hand, Islington is home to some of the wealthiest people in the country. It lies at the centre of one of the most dynamic cities in the world, which is home to world-class business clusters, over 18,000 businesses of all types and sizes, and is employing over 256,000 people.

On the other hand, Islington has one of the highest rates of child poverty in the UK, with over a third of our children living in poverty, and frequently trapped in unsuitable accommodation. Too many residents struggle to find good jobs, and lack the right skills, networks, or confidence for growing sectors. It is a place for smaller businesses where the impact of rapidly rising property costs and business rates negatively impacts on their ability to grow and remain within the borough.

A place of such intense inequality doesn't work for anyone.

Our vision is for a more equal Islington, where everyone can reach their potential and enjoy a good quality of life, whatever their background.

Islington's affordable workspaces are a key part of our Community Wealth Building programme. These workspaces bring local businesses together in new workspaces to create a thriving local economy for Islington with job creation and business support generating social value for our local communities.

We want Islington to have an inclusive economy that puts our people first and lets everyone thrive – by putting equality, social justice and sustainability at the heart of what we do.

Our spaces have only been open for a short time, but you will see from this report that the impact they are already having is extremely encouraging. The first workspace opened in late 2019, and since then we have opened a further three spaces, with three more due to become operational in 2022.

Despite the challenging context of Covid-19 and the uncertainties arising from the UK's exit from the EU, we have already managed to deliver over £1 million of social value and starting to make a real difference to the lives of some of the most excluded members of our community.

This report highlights inspirational human stories that are at the heart of everything we do, and looks ahead to the coming year for the programme. The social value outputs shown, demonstrate the wide variety of benefits that the workspaces are delivering for the borough already.

After several years of preparation, our aspirations for this important programme are now being realised and it is testament to the hard work our partners and the many officers across numerous council teams who have taken this from idea to reality. I'd also like to recognise the invaluable enabling role that the Greater London Authority (GLA) has played. None of this would work if it wasn't for the support of our community groups, local business networks, developers and ward councillors, who have all helped shape and champion our spaces from day one – a big thank you to all of you.

This is economic development that is built from the bottom up – it is an approach centred around community development – a grassroots-led process where people come together to take action on what's important to them to improve the quality of life for their community.



We recognise that this is not a quick-fix, which is why our commitment to our new affordable workspaces is long-term and holistic. In the coming year we will continue to work collaboratively to ensure we create even more social value, as well as open at least three new spaces.

This is only the beginning, and I am genuinely excited to see what this innovative and exciting programme can achieve in the future.

Councillor Santiago Bell-Bradford
Executive Member for Inclusive Economy and Jobs



Social value to date



By providing a range of workspaces across the borough of various sizes, Islington and our workspace operator partners are proud to have delivered **over £1.24 million equivalent** of social value output up until March 2022. This programme and our way of working with the operators, small businesses and local people can only go from strength to strength.

Property statistics:

- Total secured workspace to date = 5,429sqm
- Total operational workspace = 1,715sqm
- Estimated further workspace in development = 3,258sqm



Operational and pipeline AWS sites

Operational sites

- 1 SPACE4 304m²
- 2 FC Designer Workspace 618m²
- 3 Better Space 668m²
- 4 TownSq: Islington, White Collar Factory 348m²
- 5 TownSq: Islington, 250 City Road 340m²
- 6 TownSq: Islington 160m²

Sites in development

- 1 Dingley Place 300+m²
- 2 Regents Wharf 500+m²
- 3 Garrett Street 1000+m²
- 4 Bingfield Garages 150+m²

Operational sites

SPACE4

Co-working and office space with a focus on workers' co-operatives, 'tech for good' businesses and social innovators.

Location: Fonthill Road, Finsbury Park

Operator: Outlandish with anchor tenant

Founders and Coders

Years in operation: Three

Social value to date: £843,900



FC Designer Workspace

Studios and textile work areas including photography studio.

Location: Durham Road, Finsbury Park

Operator: Fashion Enter Ltd

Years in operation: One

Social value to date: Included within the

figure below



FC Designer Collective

Retail and workshop space for local designers and makers to showcase and sell their products.

Location: Fonthill Road, Finsbury Park

Operator: Fashion Enter Ltd

Years in operation: Three

Social value to date: £230,886



Better Space

Co-working and meeting space.

Location: The Ray building, 127

Farringdon Road

Operator: City University

Years in operation: One

Social value to date: £165,688



TownSq: Islington

Three Spaces offering co-working, office space and recording space.

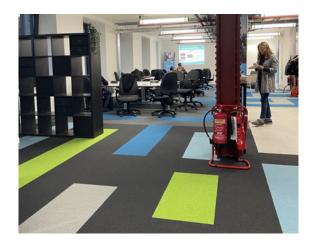
Locations: White Collar Factory, Old Street, 160 Old Street and 250 City Road, EC1

Operator: Townsquare Square Ltd

Years in operation: One (contract agreed in 2021)

Social value to date: not yet counted due

to first year of operation





What is affordable workspace and how do we secure it?

When developers want to build large commercial buildings in Islington, the council will secure genuinely affordable workspaces for local businesses, located in some of the most attractive business zones that London has to offer. Through the planning process, developers will be asked to provide workspace for at least 10 years, at peppercorn rent to the council.

The provision of these spaces is secured through a legal agreement with the developer known as a Section 106 agreement.

Affordable workspace is often defined as workspace that has a rental value below the market rate. However, within Islington rents of up to 80% of market value may not always be affordable to micro and small businesses. The council is therefore committed to assessing the affordability of any new workspaces that it delivers on a case by case basis.

Affordable workspaces are managed by a range of operating partners, appointed by the council, including not for profit organisations.

We also develop existing unused spaces and work with experienced partners to set up and run them. Together, we look to increase social value by providing vital start-up opportunities and support for our communities.



Why is affordable workspace so important to us?

The nature of London's economic growth and sharp rise in population have combined to place particular stress on land markets. These stresses are particularly evident in Islington given its location within the Central Activities Zone (CAZ), in close proximity to central London and its financial district.

Rapidly rising land values have increased competition for space between the residential and commercial property markets, which leads to increases in business rents and makes the borough a more unaffordable place to do business. This is especially an issue for small and medium enterprises who are generally more sensitive to rising rents and business rates.

Small and medium enterprises comprise the vast majority of businesses in Islington – so protecting their space in the borough is vital to our economy. A diverse local economy is more resilient to change, rather than one that is dominated by a small number of sectors or even businesses.

The diversity and dynamism of Islington's business clusters is therefore critically important to Islington's continued economic resilience and growth.

The continued success of these clusters is crucially dependent upon the ability of micro and small businesses within the same or complementary sectors to locate within a small geographical area. This co-location enables businesses to trade with one another and share knowledge, resources and skills.

We know that small and medium businesses are much more likely to re-invest their money locally – by employing more local people; using more local suppliers; and, using local services – building community wealth here in Islington.

What happens in an affordable workspace?

Islington's communities are full of talented, creative and ambitious people. Many of them would like to start or grow their own business, but don't have the finance, experience or the tools to do so.

This is where the affordable workspace programme comes in.

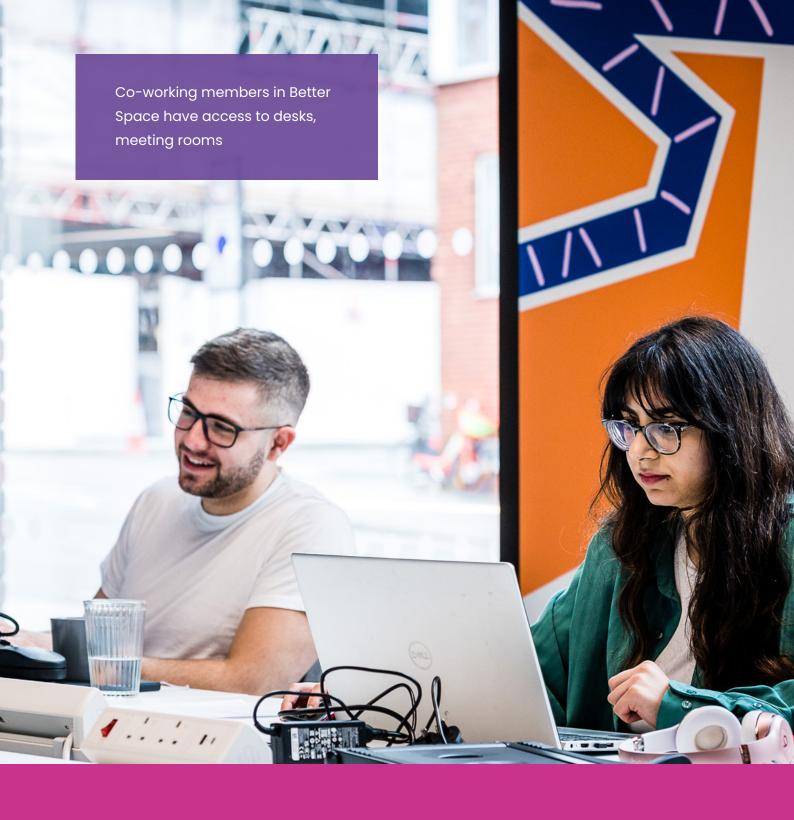
Our affordable workspace operators do much more than just offering a desk and fast broadband. Along with us, they really care about creating workspaces and economic places that change people's lives and contribute towards our goal of building a more equal Islington.

They provide small businesses and start-ups with the essential ingredients for success. Bringing like-minded individuals together in the same space means that collaboration, shared experiences and mutual support come as standard – backed up by advice, training and mentoring, which is available for free or at a low cost.

We want the users of our affordable workspaces to grow and blossom into fully fledged businesses that, once ready, will hopefully set up in their own locations in Islington. This will help keep the benefits within the community and lead to more local jobs, better training and apprenticeship opportunities for local job seekers and a vital boost to the economy.

It also means working beyond the walls of the affordable workspace itself and promoting the council's inclusive economy agenda. We ask our operators to influence responsible business practices in the local cluster – holding events for small and micro businesses who are in the area. We ask them to help promote initiatives about the London Living Wage, supporting the Net Zero campaign as well as promoting diversity and inclusion in the workforce.

Overall, we believe that the social value in lieu of financial income allows for greater benefit to be delivered to the local community directly and efficiently. It allows the programme to adapt according to needs, demand and delivering timely and appropriate benefits.



What is social value and how do we measure it?

Social value is defined as the additional social, economic and environmental impact of a contract. Organisations, businesses or individuals who work towards positive impacts are 'adding social value' to the local economy, by contributing to the long-term wellbeing and resilience of individuals and the local community.

When we work with partners on an affordable workspace, we prioritise generating social value, rather than creating financial return for the council.

At the start of the project, we agree what social value we want to achieve, and these objectives are built into a concession agreement with our operators.

As the project develops, we monitor the progress against these objectives. As well as seeing the benefits first-hand, we use a tool called Social Value Portal TOMs evaluation methodology. It is the figures generated through this evaluation that you will see throughout this report. As a financial 'proxy' they are a measure of the benefit to the borough.

The TOMs framework (Themes, Outcomes, and Measures) is broken down into five core themes. All our workspace operators report quarterly on their outcomes, or the work that they have done. We input this information into the portal that calculates, using a benchmarking set of measures, the social value delivered in monetary and other unit values.

Social value themes include:

- 1. Local skills and employment
- 2. Growth of responsible local businesses
- 3. Healthier safer and more resilient communities
- 4. Decarbonising and safeguarding our world
- 5. Social innovation

Operators are not required to achieve these formal targets until the second year of operation – allowing them time to establish the workspace, business support, events and training streams and bring in the first tenants and users. However, in this report we have captured all early outputs, whether quantitative or qualitative, and estimated a monetary value where possible. This gives us an early indication on the progress and future social value impact that our workspace operators will generate for the borough.



Finsbury Park affordable workspaces

Finsbury Park is a busy, multi-cultural area with cafes and shops that reflect the diversity of the local community. It has an estimated population of 14,250, which accounts for 7% of the total population of Islington, many of whom live on the Andover Estate and the Six Acres Estate. It is the most deprived ward in the borough, but with a strong sense of community, creativity and determination.

We wanted to create workspaces in the heart of the community and demonstrate a clear understanding of what drives the local economy. With an award of £943,095 from the Mayor's Good Growth Fund and match funding of £1.1 million from the council, we have been able to create three new workspaces in the Fonthill Road area of Finsbury Park.

The first Finsbury Park space to open was SPACE4, in November 2019. Tech is a massively popular and growing sector right now, with creative and innovative tech firms setting up all across the borough. However, it is a sector that is often inaccessible to many local people, despite world class opportunities on their doorstep.

With the right training, networks and support, entry into the industry can be highly rewarding and more accessible than many people realise. The range of job roles and opportunities available, from app development to computer forensics, cyber security to web design, make a career in tech an excellent chance for local residents to reach their potential.

SPACE4 already had a small space on Fonthill Road, but didn't have long-term security of tenure and the demand for space outstripped what they were able to provide. With the purchase of a long-term lease, co-funded by the Mayor of London, we were able to partner with Space4 to expand into a larger space, and lay down foundations for a longer-term strategy to grow the local 'tech for good' sector.

SPACE4

Operator: Outlandish with Founders and Coders

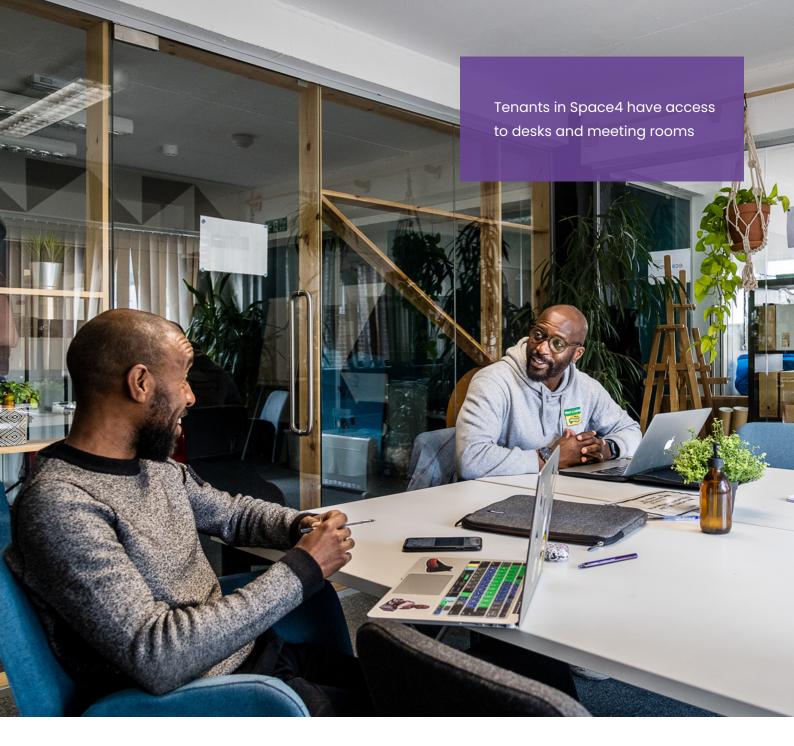
Sector: Tech and Co-operatives

Visit: space4.tech

SPACE4 Tech Space, Fonthill Road, is managed by Outlandish - a digital worker cooperative, owned by its members, with its profits invested into developing new projects for social change. Specialising in technology that makes the world a fairer, better place, Outlandish produces web apps, data dashboards and monitoring tools that aid the discovery of new insights from complex data, to mass-impact campaigns and websites that promote causes and mobilise key audiences.

Since moving into SPACE4 in 2021 we have been able to work more efficiently, provide a local service to our beneficiaries and network with like-minded businesses. It can be lonely being a small social enterprise with no base. SPACE4 and the great service we get there, has enabled us to collaborate with others and establish firm foundations."

Jacqueline Hollows Beyond Recovery CIC



Founders and Coders

Visit: www.foundersandcoders.com

Founders and Coders, an anchor tenant of SPACE4, is a non-profit that develops and runs tuition free, peer-led training programmes in web development. It supports itself financially by acting as a local employment agency. Guided by its core values of cooperation, inclusion and social impact, Founders and Coders is a community founded on the principle of giving something back. All graduates contribute back to the programme after they graduate, starting with a commitment to mentor the next group of students.

SPACE4 - Outlandish and Founders and Coders 207 weeks Social value output total 2020/21 (£) apprenticeship **Opening date** training given to . November 45 apprenticeship £843,900k 2019 seekers 106 hours of expert workspaces use regular events and workspace business advice offered free of workshops held users aiven charge

SPACE4 is home to a community of technology activists and social innovators. They are a hub for the generation of progressive ideas, organisations and individuals and encourage collaboration amongst their members.



Fonthill Road has been a fashion hub since the 1950's. Whilst much of the manufacturing has gone, there remains a buoyant and diverse fashion retail offer.

We also knew that there was a thriving interesting in the community, who had engaged really strongly with local courses and groups around sewing and mending. Therefore, it made sense to create spaces where we could build on the fashion sector legacy and appeal to the community. The Sewing group's committed involvement to the development of this project has led to its early success.

Since the 1950's, millions of sequins and hundreds of thousands of metres of fabric have been transformed into catwalk-worthy creations for school proms, weddings and other glamorous events.

Working with Fashion Enter Ltd, a sectoral expert, the FC Designer Workspace opened in summer 2021. Offering affordable studio spaces for local makers, and regular training courses and workshops. The communal areas are fully equipped with professional standard equipment and will offer opportunities for learning and developing skills allowing local people to gain industry recognised qualifications.

With the opening of FC Designer Workspace, we have created a new generation of fashion manufacturing in Finsbury Park.

Alongside the FC Designer Workspace, is our retail workspace FC Designer Collective where our local designers and makers can sell their products. This space opened in late 2019 and has weathered the lockdown difficulties and now offers workshops, repairs, and a retail offer in the centre of Fonthill Road.

FC Designer Collective

Operator: Fashion Enter Ltd

Sector: Fashion retail

Nisit: www.fashioncapital.co.uk

Situated on Fonthill Road, FC (Fashion Capitol) Fashion Collective opened in November 2019. The operator of the retail space, Fashion Enter are experts in sampling, grading, production and the delivery of learning and development within the fashion and textiles industry.

We are proud to be part of the FC Designer Collective and look forward to the collaborative opportunities that will benefit our members, users and society as a whole."

Designer-maker Majida Sayam, front right, in the new FC Designer Workspace with members of the Jannaty sewing group.



Local designers and start-ups now have the chance to display and sell their designs, offering products that are locally made and unique. The shop is home to a diverse selection of fashion, accessories and gifts alongside fabrics, haberdashery and an on-site bespoke tailoring service.

The shop also includes on-site production facilities to enable learning, events, repair service and bespoke making. The space also doubles as a creative hub with regular meet-ups, seminars and events.

This space will continue to be closely linked to the new Fashion Enter's Designer Workspace on the nearby Andover Estate.



FC Designer Collective and FC Designer Workspace

Social value output total 2020/21 (£)

£230,886



Spaces opened in November 2019 and September 2021.

Enterprise and employment

jobs created or safeguarded (1 an Islington resident and 4 are women)

designers in studios at affordable rents

Training and events

45 Islington Residents have completed level 1 or 2 stiching or pattern cutting courses

17 events including modesty wear fashion show

Other outputs

- In July 2020, Fashion Enter provided free fabric to the Finsbury Park Sewing Group, which they used to create 800 facemasks for vulnerable Islington residents.
- The participants in the sewing group developed their sewing skills and have access to free training opportunities Fashion Enter provide in the new FC Designer Workspace.
- Fashion Enter supports the designers with web marketing and social media skills for their businesses





FC Designer Workspace

Operator: Fashion Enter Ltd

Sector: Fashion and Textiles studios and courses

visit: fcdesignerworkspace.co.uk

The FC Designer Workspace space is a new clothing manufacturing and training facility situated on Durham Road in the Andover Estate, Finsbury Park. Fashion Enter operate this space together with the retail unit so designers can sell the goods they make in the workspace.

The council has transformed unused and derelict garages on the estate into an innovative new workspace. Demand for space and courses has already been high and the space is currently fully occupied.

FC Designer Workspace offers individual studio units and support facilities for makers feeding off a central communal workshop, exhibition space and entrance lobby. The main workshop forms the central creative hub for the production of garments, with 24 sewing machines, cutting table, pressing area and photography area for everyone to use.

The external facing studio rooms all have glazed partitions that let in natural daylight and help promote a group working environment. The exhibition space and studio face Durham Road giving a direct connection with local community.

What they have achieved

Over 60 people attended the FC Designer Workspace community launch in December, with council colleagues, councillors, the GLA, community groups and local residents/designers all in attendance.

Following from the launch, four studios were allocated to local businesses at affordable rates (some free of charge) with a wraparound support offer.

Over 25 people attended a residents' day in September. As a result of this open day Fashion Enter received 18 applications for the Level 1 Stitching course.

The official launch event, also in September, saw over 70 attendees, a further three applications received from local residents to take the Level 1 Stitching course and a further studio allocated to a local designer.



Case study - Tenant: Another Earthling

Mary Obaseki, founder of Another Earthling, creates handmade, needle felted animal masks.

I live on the Andover Estate and love shopping on Fonthill Road, walking past and seeing my work there is such a great feeling. As a one-woman small business, you take on every aspect and must learn as you go, that can be overwhelming and quite isolating, so it's a massive blessing to be included in this project. From my products being in a local bricks and mortar shop and the mentoring, to just being part of something creative with other like-minded local women is amazing".



I am really excited for B&S to be included in the collective and to take up a place in the shop, it's a great opportunity for us to take part in our local community having made lingerie and swimwear here in North London for 20 years.

"We custom make our pieces individually to each order with a zerowaste system and send them out all over the world, but the physical shop will allow a new and responsive way to work that is full of potential.

"I am a passionate believer that this kind of small scale, personal and local approach to clothes making is key for the sustainable fashion that we need for the future."



Affordable workspaces in Old Street and Farringdon

Old Street also known as 'Tech City' has become a central hub for tech businesses and Farringdon renowned for creative and design industries each now host an affordable workspace.

Working with developers like Derwent, Berkeley Homes, Great Ropemaker partnership and Viridis Real Estate our affordable workspaces give local people access to high quality space within new build and fit for purpose workspaces. These are financially accessible and will remain so through our ongoing social value contractual requirements with the operators.

Better Space

Operator: City University

Sector: Coworking desk membership

Nisit: www.betterspace.london

In June 2021, Better Space opened its doors as the council's first operational affordable workspace secured through a section 106 agreement for a major development in the borough. The 6,000 sqft space on the ground and lower ground floors of The Ray Farringdon is operated by City, University of London. A 10-year collaboration that will provide genuinely affordable workspace to micro and small businesses and deliver a range of skills and employment initiatives for the benefit of residents, businesses, and communities.

Better Space acts as a social enterprise hub, providing specialist support to social enterprises, facilitating local job, and training opportunities and contributing to the wider business ecosystem (through networking, events and promoting local supply chains). The partnership provides a facility for City, University of London to share its expertise in entrepreneurship and business start-ups with the wider Islington community, developing new opportunities and adding value to the local area.







Alina Monaghan-Gibson, Head of Programmes at Tutors United - a social enterprise that provides literacy and numeracy support for children and their families.

After a year of remote working, Better Space has been perfect for us as we've looked to adopt a more hybrid working environment. The packages are really flexible and easy."

TownSq: Islington

Operator: Town Square Ltd

Sector: Coworking desk membership

Nisit: www.townsqislington.co.uk

Islington resident as the Community Manager

Start-Up Club programme run. The 12 week programme of weekly talks from business and entrepreneur specialists

Events on business topics

Opening its first space in April 2022 TownSq: Islington will open two more spaces in the Old Street area, 160 Old Street and 250 City Road. Located in the heart of Tech City, these spaces will deliver top quality genuinely affordable shared workspace, meeting rooms, podcast facilities, and training space for local residents and start-up businesses.

Space users will be supported by a wraparound of business support from an award-winning organisation, which has been successful in helping hundreds of new businesses around the country to succeed.

Townsq: Islington will also be the first of our new spaces to offer free desk space to participants in the LIFT Programme.

The Townsq: Islington community manager is herself a resident of Bunhill ward and was recruited through Islington's recruitment site www.islingtonworking.com.

The social value that will be delivered from these spaces will include, business support, events and networking opportunities together with rentable space, hot desks, fixed desks, meetings rooms and free desks.

What they've achieved

The first round of Start-up Club ran during spring 2022. This is a training programme for Islington residents looking to start their own business.

Run over a series of weeks, meeting together for dinner the participants hear from different experts in business covering different topics each week.



The Start-up Club programme is designed to equip participants with the basic skills and information needed to turn a business idea into reality.

"For some, the idea of starting a business can be daunting. The thought of having to give up their day job and take the risk of starting from scratch, worrying about how to pay bills while building. The truth is that most businesses don't begin on a gamble.

They are side-projects or ideas that are grown gently until they are in a position to be worked on full-time.

It's also not all about building big business empires; many people who come through our programme just want to take charge of their own careers and work for themselves. Being solo selfemployed is a real option for many people, but it can be difficult to know just where to start".

Anna Chuicharoen, Community Manager TownSq: Islington

Next steps

Securing further spaces in new developments across the borough is our priority for the coming years.

We are planning for at least four further sites over the next 12 months in various parts of the borough from Caledonian to Bunhill Wards. We will continue to evaluate the lessons learned from the operational sites we have and feed this into the next stage of the programme.

We also plan to diversify our portfolio – exploring more opportunities to bring back to life under-utilised spaces in our portfolio, and on our high streets.

We are pleased to be one of four boroughs working together in the LIFT programme (Leading Inclusive Futures through Technology) to develop opportunities for workspace and free desk spaces as part of this exciting programme. Working closely with our partners in Camden, Hackney and Tower Hamlets, to create an affordable eco-system that supports local entrepreneurs to grow and thrive in our boroughs – creating growon space so that successful small businesses can scale and stay in our locality.

More details of our Affordable Workspace Strategy is available on our website. We will be returning to the strategy during this year to ensure that we are focusing our workspaces in the right sectors, in the right places and for the needs of our residents.

Our partners

Greater London Authority (GLA)

Visit: www.london.gov.uk

LIFT (Leading Inclusive Futures through Technology)

Visit: www.liftfutures.london

Our affordable workspace operators

FC Designer Workspace
Operator: Fashion Enter Ltd

Studios 9-12, 9 Durham Road, Finsbury Park, N7 7FB

FC Designer Collective
Operator: Fashion Enter Ltd

113-115 Fonthill Road, Finsbury Park, N4 3HH

Visit: www.fcdesignerworkspace.co.uk

Call: 020 8809 3311

Better Space

Operator: City, University of London

127 Farringdon Road, ECIR 3DA Visit: www.betterspace.london

SPACE4

Operator: Outlandish

4th Floor, 113-115 Fonthill Rd, Finsbury Park, N4 3HH Visit: www.outlandish.com Call: 020 7561 9968

TownSq: Islington

Operator: Town Square Ltd

White Collar Factory, Old Street Yard, ECIY 8AF

Visit: www.townsqislington.co.uk

Call: 020 8050 0115

How to get involved

To find out more about Islington's affordable workspaces and our strategy, please get in touch:

www.islington.gov.uk/affordable-workspace
affordableworkspace@islington.gov.uk

If you would like more information or this document in large print or Braille, audiotape or in another language, please contact 020 7527 2000.