

For immediate release

10/3/2021

New call for more support for children and young people in Islington

The Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdown restrictions have had a devastating effect on the daily lives and overall mental health of many young people in the UK, and in our own borough. Many feel like their whole futures are at risk. To respond to the increasing needs, Islington Giving is reaching out to individuals and businesses in the borough to contribute to a special young people's fund to help the variety of groups providing activities and support to young people.

Sarah Benioff from Islington Giving says: *"Covid-19 has been especially hard on younger people who have not been able to go to school, play out or see their friends. But more than that it has shone the spotlight on just how unequal the life chances are for many children and young people in Islington. Donating to Islington Giving is one important and practical way that, as a community, we can help to bridge the digital divide, to offer new safe and supervised sports and outdoor activities and to increase mental wellbeing support."*

CLLr Una O'Halloran, Islington Council's executive member for community development, said: *"We're determined to make Islington a fairer place, where everyone, whatever their background, has the same chance to reach their potential and enjoy a good quality of life."*

"Young people have been hit hard by Covid-19 and lockdown. Islington's amazing voluntary and community organisations play a vital role in giving young people help, support and better opportunities."

"Making a donation to Islington Giving's young people fund, for those who can afford to give, will make a real difference to improving the lives of young people in our borough."

The pandemic has significantly increased mental health difficulties among many children and young people, particularly children living in poverty, and young people with learning difficulties or pre-existing mental health conditions.

"I had a couple of breakdowns, really bad breakdowns, I started crying, I literally locked myself away in a room for six months... I wasn't talking to no-one... I literally just switched off"

Many services and voluntary sector organisations are struggling to meet increasing demand while facing a rapid decrease in funding. Groups and organisations supporting young people have had to significantly adapt their operations through moving online or offering extra sessions to remain in compliance with new restrictions, which has added to their financial burden.

Child poverty is already an issue in Islington, with nearly 50% of primary-aged children on Free School meals. Since March 2020, there has already been an 8% increase in Free School Meal eligibility compared to pre-pandemic. Young people already suffering from the impact of inequalities are suffering more during this time. According to a survey on digital inclusion completed in Islington schools, it was estimated that between 15% and 20% of pupils did not have access to a device to help with their schoolwork, and between 5% and 10% of pupils did not have internet access. What's more, since last March youth unemployment has more than doubled.

Thanks to the help of Islington Giving and Islington Council, over 3,000 devices were donated to the most vulnerable pupils in the borough.

With continuing local efforts, it is not too late to turn things around. Islington Giving works with many groups doing amazing work with our children and young people and can support even more projects through this fund.

For more information, or for interview requests with either Islington Giving or groups we support, please contact Anu Liisanantti at Islington Giving: Anu.Liisanantti@islingtongiving.org.uk