

Young London speaks

Young people's views on improving the street environment

Report of the Environment Committee

February 2004

Environment Committee Membership & Terms of Reference

At the meeting of the Assembly on 7 May 2003, the membership and terms of reference of the Environment Committee was agreed as the following:

Samantha Heath (Chair)	Labour
Roger Evans (Deputy Chair)	Conservative
Brian Coleman	Conservative
Darren Johnson	Green
Diana Johnson	Labour
Graham Tope	Liberal Democrat

1. To examine and report from time to time on –
 - the strategies, policies and actions of the Mayor and the Functional Bodies
 - matters of importance to Greater London
2. To examine and report to the Assembly from time to time on the Mayor's Air Quality, Biodiversity, Energy, Noise and Waste Strategies, in particular their implementation and revision.
3. To consider environmental matters on request from another standing committee and report its opinion to that standing committee.
4. To take into account in its deliberations the cross cutting themes of: the health of persons in Greater London; and the promotion of opportunity.
5. To respond on behalf of the Assembly to consultations and similar processes when within its terms of reference.

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Chair's Foreword



This report shows that young people want to be involved in their communities and that they have a wealth of ideas about how to improve them.

We are always being told that our youth are alienated from politics and community involvement. Our evidence showed that young people feel strongly about street cleanliness, have ideas for how to improve their environment and many want to be involved in improving where they live.

But reading research and submissions to the Environment Committee for the 'Protecting the City' environment scrutiny, it became clear that young people's views were not being represented and this left a significant gap in the report.

Young people are key users of public spaces and issues like graffiti, fly-posting, abandoned cars and litter affect them just as much, if not more, than adults.

Hearing their views is useful too because they are often perceived as one of the groups responsible for this sort of crime. We were interested to know about their experiences as well as how they thought environmental crime should be tackled.

What became clear very quickly, and is reflected in this report, is that young people care about their environment.

Young people need to be involved in the planning and design of developments, more visible neighbourhood wardens - selected with their help - and more youth clubs to stop boredom breeding crime. And if we want to change their attitudes, we need them to help us do that. Young people need to design the campaigns that are supposed to change their attitudes and behaviour - they know which messages and methods work and which will provoke rebellion.

We have a responsibility to tap their talent and enthusiasm. Young people are seen as part of the problem when they should be the solution and they need to be involved every step of the way. It is up to us to use more imaginative ways of engaging them. Community meetings in town halls with stuffy suits are unlikely to do the job.

This report reflects the views of hundreds of young people across London and is the first of its kind. I hope it is only the start of a deeper dialogue with young people.

I would like to thank Anna Malos, Children and Neighbourhoods in London and all the young people who took part in focus groups. Particular thanks go to Daniel Oteng, Lavinia Acheampong, Stephanie Fyfe, Natalie Ademakinwa, Jack Bond, Abby Humphreys, and Kichelle Morrison who came and gave us their views in person.

Samantha Heath, 26 February 2004

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Samantha Heath".

Executive Summary

As we expected, on the basis of other related research, young people did feel that 'Envirocrime' affects their quality of life, affects the perception of safety of an area and hence whether they are given permission to be outside.

The research brought out important differences in young people's views from those of many adults in two areas: graffiti and fly-posting. Unlike for many adults, young people's views on graffiti depended on whether it is 'artistic' graffiti or tagging. Young people are able to appreciate graffiti as an art form and made a clear distinction between that which enhances an environment and tagging which mars it.

Young people generally did not think of fly-posting as a problem. They stated that such posters are a good way of finding out about what is going on. Young people are clearly a major market for those putting up posters illegally, so we must tackle their desire for information in a more acceptable way. Alternative methods of promoting events, such as community poster sites, should be established.

These differences in views must be addressed by initiatives to reduce graffiti and fly-posting. The Mayor should consider how these differences in attitude should shape the implementation of his Waste strategy, and work with the boroughs on street cleanliness.

Throughout the sessions, young people mentioned the need to change attitudes, mentality and culture so that young people and adults care about their local area, feel that they can improve it and are involved in initiatives to do so. Young people cite both apathy and rebellion as important factors influencing behaviour.

Young people suggest appropriate ways in which messages should be put across to capture the attention of young people, and mentioned the difficulty of getting a message across without it becoming something to be rebelled against, as well as the important balance between education and fun. The Committee suggests that they are involved in the design of campaigns and that these take place both in school and out.

A dual track approach of prevention and responding to crimes committed is required. Prevention should be through education, diversion and design measures. Overcoming boredom and lack of both supervised and unsupervised activities is an essential part of prevention. Response to crimes should be through selecting appropriate punishments, enforcement and supportive programmes to change behaviour of those who have committed offences as well as rapid clearance of the dumping, litter etc.

Punishments such as fines are considered to be a potentially useful deterrent, but young people stress the need for more advertising about fines, and better enforcement and suggest other punishments. Young people are aware of various physical measures to prevent 'Envirocrime', but had different opinions about their effectiveness. CCTV is not always thought to be effective either as a deterrent or for enforcement.

Wardens and community policing were discussed by a number of groups and they are generally considered effective. However there are also criticisms and suggestions for improvements. The Committee recommends that the Metropolitan Police Service and street warden teams consider how to improve their work with young people.

Finally the benefits and important factors for involving young people in regeneration is discussed, and the need for adults to have constructive attitudes towards young people. The Committee recommends that youth participation in regeneration schemes needs to be systematic and a central part of the project.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 On reading the information and views submitted to the Environment Committee for our Protecting the City Environment scrutiny, it was clear that young people's views were not represented. This was an important omission as young people are key users of public spaces:

Young people are around more in their home areas; they experience it [crime] on the streets more than, say, adults, who tend to be going from one point to another when they are out and about, rather than socialising with their friends in those areas¹.

- 1.2 We also wanted to consider the views of young people and how they would tackle relevant crimes because they are frequently perceived as one of the main groups which act in ways that damage the street environment. Therefore, the Committee commissioned work with young people, questioning them on their views and ideas on envirocrime in order to overcome the gap in evidence. This report presents the findings from this work and considers the implications for initiatives to improve the street environment.
- 1.3 Children and Neighbourhoods in London, part of The Children's Society, conducted five focus groups during December 2003 with young people aged 11 – 18 years to seek their views on envirocrime and reviewed relevant research. The group discussions considered the impact of graffiti, fly-posting, fly-tipping, litter and abandoned vehicles on young Londoners and what measures are being taken or should be taken to tackle these problems.
- 1.4 A number of the young people who took part in the research attended a session of the Environment Committee on 4 February 2004, when the consultants' findings were presented, in order to discuss their views directly with the Committee members.
- 1.5 The Committee also had the opportunity to discuss how these issues relate to young people, on site visits to King's Cross on 13 October 2003 and to Hackney Free and Parochial School on 9 February 2004.
- 1.6 We found that young people feel that these issues affect their quality of life and their perceptions of safety, as expected from other research. They think that younger children are worse affected because levels of envirocrime influences whether they are allowed to play outside.
- 1.7 It should be recognized that whilst all these crimes negatively affect young people to some degree, they are not equally involved in them. Tagging is more likely to be committed by young people, with more artistic graffiti also associated with youth, although less exclusively. Fly-posting is frequently aimed at younger people, but the act itself is not particularly carried out by them and instead tends to be an economic activity. The majority of abandoned cars are dumped by adults because they are too expensive to keep on the road. In certain areas, some young people will then exacerbate this by setting fire to existing abandoned cars; and others abandon vehicles after joy-riding, sometimes having vandalised or burnt them. The likelihood that someone will drop litter is not strongly related to age. Illegal dumping is far more likely to be carried out by adults than young people.
- 1.8 It should also be remembered that even when young people are the most common protagonists of a particular crime, it is only committed by a small proportion of young people.

¹ Natalie Callaghan, Children and Neighbourhoods in London. Oral evidence 4 February 2004

2 Existing attitudes

- 2.1 At the start of discussions about an issue, young people were asked about their attitudes on litter, graffiti, fly-posting, fly-tipping and abandoned cars to compare their views with adult perceptions and to identify where attitudes differ.

Litter

- 2.2 Young people's attitudes to litter reflect those of adults. It is seen as making a place look dirty and so affects people's general attitude to an area and creates a mentality of indifference.
- 2.3 Young people cite both apathy and rebellion as important factors motivating behaviour: "Some people here don't care like. They just think somebody else will clean it up", "Some children don't care innit, so they just throw it [litter], and you can't tell them to pick it up as they will say 'Who are you to tell me to pick it up...'", "They can't be bothered to find a bin", "If someone tells you to do something you do the opposite" and "yeah it's like I'm a goody goody and I want to keep the place tidy".²
- 2.4 Some feel that other young people are lazy, and do not actively seek to put rubbish in bins "They just want to get where they are going to...they can't be bothered to find a bin". However this is not always felt to be simply about laziness as the lack of litter bins is also felt an issue. "There ain't a bin on **** Lane from top to bottom", "We want to put the litter in bins to make our area look clean, but there are no bins, so we can't", "The bins get burned...boredom, just people being stupid burning the bins', 'because they're plastic they just melt".
- 2.5 Not everyone accepts litter as their responsibility, instead considering that road sweepers are responsible for cleaning up litter and question why they should be fined "What do they have road sweepers for, if they didn't have rubbish on the floor they would not need road sweepers would they?"

Abandoned cars

- 2.6 Young people mostly think of abandoned cars as stolen vehicles driven by joy riders which are later abandoned and perhaps burnt out. They did also recognise that the issue included cars that are untaxed or discarded.
- 2.7 Due to the emphasis on cars abandoned after joyriding, young people also mostly think about how to reduce numbers of abandoned vehicles via reducing joyriding.
- 2.8 It is interesting to note that this topic brought up issues of inequality in response to the crime. One group stated that "here the police cannot be bothered", and that "the police would try harder to catch the persons involved in dumping cars" in a nearby area, considered to be a "nice area".

Flytipping

- 2.9 Flytipping is the illegal dumping of waste. It can be classified in three types: commercial – where a company either has no waste disposal arrangements or puts out more waste than is covered by their arrangement; residential where households put out rubbish outside normal collection times or bulky items; and organised crime – where companies are paid to clear rubbish and then dump it illegally to save money. Clearly fly-tipping is largely committed by adults. However, the young people

² All quotes without specific sources are the anonymous views from participants in the focus groups. These views are quoted from the report by Children and Neighbourhoods in London for the Committee.

questioned are aware of initiatives to lessen this problem, and some believed young people should be involved in work to reduce it:

it [fly-tipping] affects them [young people] and even if it doesn't affect them it affects the area they live in, and that is in turn affecting them

Differing perceptions

- 2.10 The research brought out important differences in the views of young people from those of many adults, particularly as regards graffiti and fly-posting. In addition there is a perception that there is an overall difference in how adults and young people react to such issues:

It has been said that adults are more serious and more 'moany' about it, and that children do not take it as seriously.³

Graffiti

- 2.11 Unlike for many adults, young peoples' views on graffiti depend on whether it is 'artistic' graffiti or tagging. Young people are able to appreciate graffiti as an art form and make a clear distinction between 'artistic' graffiti which enhances an environment: "I think it makes it [my area] more colourful", and 'tagging': "when people go round with spray cans and spray an area it does not look nice".

There are some types of graffiti that can make the area look good, but tagging does not make it look very attractive and it is all over the place on random walls and it does not make it look very safe.⁴

Fly-posting

- 2.12 Young people generally found that fly-posting is not a problem. They stated that it is a good way of finding out about what is going on: "fly-posting can be informative, when I come down here, I see that there's a concert or a new album coming out, and I'm like OK I might check that out", "And other things about parties and raves and stuff".

They find it very useful when they come round to where we are to be able to find out the concerts that are coming on and any new albums that are coming out so they can keep an eye out for it.⁵

³ Suzannah Gayle, Groundwork Southwark. Oral Evidence 4 February 2004

⁴ Daniel Oteng. Oral Evidence 4 February 2004.

⁵ Natalie Callaghan Children and Neighbourhoods in London. Oral Evidence 4 February 2004

3 Changing attitudes

3.1 Throughout the focus groups, participants mentioned the need to change attitudes, mentality and culture so that more young people care about their local area, feel that they can improve it and get involved in initiatives to do so. A sense of ownership, involvement and pride is recognised by young people as a key way to reduce the likelihood of people acting in ways that reduce the quality of the street environment.

3.2 There are three groups whose attitudes are important for dealing with these issues: the minority who currently litter, spray graffiti etc; those who may start to do so in the future; and those who see such behaviour, but do not tackle it.

Education

3.3 There is both optimism and scepticism about the effectiveness of education campaigns. "I think that littering is probably a bit of a mentality thing, so they should teach children from a young age not to litter and make them aware of the consequences of littering", "We learn most of that in schools anyway, but nothing happens".

3.4 Young people are interested to suggest appropriate ways in which messages should be put across to capture the attention of young people: "young people could come up with modern things that can appeal to their own kinda age group, and they know what can capture their imagination" and "I think they should have famous people on it [a commercial]".

3.5 Young people also highlight the important balance between education and fun: "you have to make it way that make them understand, hold bashments [dances] and in the middle stop and say that this crime is wrong, that kind of thing, because that's the only way I would listen". The difficulty is getting a message across without that message becoming something to rebel against.

Yes, it is important to engage with all sectors of the community, but finding out from young people always goes back to asking them how they want to explore these issues. We do a lot of work with multimedia, we do website design, we have worked with Camden to develop an environmental website and a magazine for young people. It is things like that that actually interest young people – music projects and video projects.⁶

Recommendation 1

Education campaigns aimed at young people must involve them in the design of such campaigns so that appropriate methods and messages are used to create constructive peer pressure to deliver the campaign objectives.

3.6 Hackney Free and Parochial School is a secondary school that is part of the eco-school initiative. This a programme for promoting environmental awareness through many curriculum subjects, including citizenship, personal, social and health education and education for sustainable development. The eco-school process works by involving the whole school (pupils, teachers, non-teaching staff and governors) together with members of the local community (parents, the local authority, the media and local businesses). It aims to encourage teamwork and help to create a shared understanding of what it takes to run a school in a way that respects and enhances the environment.

⁶ Fiona Side Children and Neighbourhoods in London 4 February 2004

Recommendation 2

Schools at both primary and secondary levels must address problems of the street environment, such as litter and graffiti, at the core of school activities through the national curriculum and other mechanisms. The Committee welcomes the extension of the Mayor's London Schools Environment Award to secondary level as one mechanism for this and would also highlight the work of the Metropolitan Police Service and the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority in schools and youth groups.

Adult perceptions

- 3.7 Another important aspect of changing attitudes is that adults ought to reconsider how they view young people. This comes across most strongly from professionals involved in our research who worked with young people.
- Obviously there are different barriers for different people in different areas, but ... one that has come up in every subject has been adults' perceptions of children and young people, where children feel that they are being viewed as either victims or villains. It is very difficult for them to get involved and they have to work doubly hard to try and overcome these adult perceptions.⁷
- If people respect young people, then maybe they would respect their environment more as well, if people stop pointing fingers at young people.⁸
- 3.8 The Committee believes that work by the Mayor on the implementation of the Municipal Waste Strategy and other strategic work on waste and street cleanliness should take into consideration young people's concerns and creative ideas for overcoming problems in these areas.
- 3.9 The formation and implementation of policy should take into account where young people's attitudes to issues such as graffiti and fly-posting differ from adults. This will help ensure that issues are addressed in a way that is satisfactory to all sectors of the community.

Recommendation 3

The Mayor, particularly through joint working by the Children and Young People's Unit and Environment teams, should ensure that the implementation of his waste strategies and work on street cleanliness addresses the ideas and concerns of young people.

⁷ Louisa Neuberger, The Glasshouse Oral evidence 4 February 2004

⁸ Fiona Side, Children and Neighbourhoods in London, Oral evidence 4 February 2004.

4 Changing behaviour

- 4.1 Whilst litter, graffiti, fly-posting, fly-tipping and abandoned vehicles all affect the quality of the street environment and how safe people feel in it, the motivation for those people who commit these different crimes is distinct for each issue. Changing attitudes may influence generally how much people care about their streets and whether they will take action to improve them. But to change behaviour of the minority of people who commit these crimes, other aspects of their motivation should be tackled.

Tackling boredom via diversionary projects

- 4.2 Boredom is mentioned as a reason why young people commit crimes: “young people joy ride because they are bored”, “the bins get burned ... boredom, just people being stupid, burning the bins”.
- 4.3 This also fits with other work on young people’s motivation for crime and incidence of youth crime which links having nowhere better to go or nothing better to do with the likelihood of committing crime.⁹ Work by NSPCC recommended increased youth provision as an important method of reducing youth crime¹⁰ and case studies by the Home Office showed areas with high provision had lower crime levels.¹¹
- 4.4 Diversionary work is the most common intervention to reduce such motivation and can be divided into two types: general youth provision to prevent boredom, and that which is aimed specifically at preventing certain behaviour e.g. graffiti, joyriding. The difficulty can be that the very people whom it is most important to reach are those who are least likely to become involved in official projects.
- 4.5 As well as supervised youth provision, there is also a need for spaces where young people can congregate informally. Lack of space for informal entertainment is worse for those under 18 years old, due to licencing laws which prevent them from entering pubs and because this age group is less likely to have money to be able to hang out in cafes. This is why young people tend to gather in public areas.
- young people wanted more spaces for them, where they can actually congregate and not cause too much noise and bother to the surrounding neighbours, but just have that space for themselves, either supervised or unsupervised¹²
- 4.6 It is exactly the idea of providing unsupervised areas where young people can socialise that is behind youth shelters. These are designed to meet the social needs of young people by creating a sheltered place to sit and talk. A roof provides some protection from the weather, but most shelters are open on all sides to create natural supervision and prevent users feeling trapped in them. It can be difficult to find suitable locations for such shelters because they need to be far enough away from nearby housing yet not too isolated. However councils have found that the shelters can significantly reduce the cost of graffiti clearance and vandalism where they have been introduced with appropriate involvement of young people and other residents.¹³

⁹ Campbell S and Harrington V. Youth crime: Findings from the 1998/99 Youth Lifestyles Survey, Home office research findings 209. 2000

¹⁰ “Building a strategy for children and young people: what children and young people told the NSPCC” NSPCC (2002)

¹¹ research by Active Citizenship Centre, Home Office 2003 cited in the consultants report.

¹² David Laird, Children and Neighbourhoods in London. Oral Evidence 4 February 2004

¹³ Youth Shelters and Sports systems – a good Practice Guide Thames Valley Police 2002

- 4.7 Participants, in the public session to discuss this, recognise that providing unsupervised space for activities would be difficult for local authorities because of the risk of litigation should there be any accidents. Despite this, such provision is still though important by some:

I am just saying what young people have said. If there is not something there for them ... They will find a space to do the graffiti; they will find a space to burn up and down on their motorbikes, and it is better that there is actually a space for them to do that, rather than doing it on the estate in the middle of the night and causing distress to other young people and also adults on the estate and the area they are living in.¹⁴

- 4.8 The Bemerton Estate in Islington and the surrounding area near King's Cross has been prone to young people stealing mopeds and motorbikes and driving them through the area and then setting fire to them. Two initiatives are seeking to reduce this problem, the local street wardens, and Sparkplug. Sparkplug is a project which aims to harness young people's interests vehicles in a more constructive manner. The project provides opportunities for young people to learn about motorbikes and motorbike maintenance and provides legal opportunities for riding motorbikes.
- 4.9 Another example of a diversionary project specifically aimed at reducing envirocrime is the 'art flat' funded by the Guinness Trust as part of their regeneration of an ex-Islington Council estate. Young people from the estate take part in supervised art projects in an unoccupied flat. This provides them with something to do and allows them to create art. The work decorates the hoardings that are around the estate during its renovation and they have remained free from graffiti.

Recommendation 4

Local authorities and central government must ensure that initiatives to tackle street crime and anti-social behaviour by young people support youth provision, of specific diversionary activities and of supervised and unsupervised areas, as an integrated and essential part of such initiatives.

Punishing crime

- 4.10 Punishments, such as fines, are considered to be a useful deterrent by participants, "I wouldn't want to pay £30 or £40 for dropping litter". However, young people stress the need for more advertising about fines, and better enforcement: "put up signs saying you'll get fined if you drop litter; that's scary", "ask the police to take it more seriously". Current practice does not seem to be acting as an effective deterrence from these comments.
- 4.11 Other punishments are also considered appropriate. Young people suggest that fly-tippers who operate as a business "could be banned from the Yellow Pages". Naming and shaming is considered useful by some, for tackling fly-tipping and graffiti, but one participant in the focus groups felt that is against human rights.
- 4.12 Zero tolerance, where action is taken against all crimes no matter how small, was considered a useful approach by some young people. However, young people resident in a borough that is attempting this approach against littering and dumping, did not realise that such a campaign was being carried out. This shows that even high profile campaigns have limited coverage.

¹⁴ Fiona Side, Children and Neighbourhoods in London. Oral Evidence 4 February 2004.

- 4.13 Young people stated that enforcement against fly-posting should not be against those who are actually putting up the posters, but against those organising the fly-posting or benefiting from it. This approach is now being used more frequently by local authorities. Indeed the City of Westminster is even seeking to use company legislation to prosecute the Directors of companies that benefit from fly-posting.
- 4.14 CCTV is not always thought to be effective: “on the bus they hide their face and tippex the cameras and start graffiti-ing the bus and the windows everywhere”, “cameras don’t work ‘cos they just shoot them out with a slingshot” and “they don’t give a very good picture of what the person looks like anyway”.
- 4.15 Certain enforcement campaigns might however reinforce rebellion and the kudos of certain actions such as graffiti. Speaking about the ‘Name that Tag’ campaign participant said: “But then again, you are going to encourage your people to do it, and it is going to be seen as something...”

Alternative legal sites

- 4.16 Legal graffiti walls are suggested as a useful measure as part of prevention:
If there was a set place, like a wall where people could do their work or their graffiti, then that would make it look a bit better in the area.
- 4.17 However during a previous scrutiny investigation on graffiti by the London Assembly, it was said by some that such walls legitimised graffiti and merely acted as a training ground for further illegal graffiti. Concern was also expressed that graffiti spread out from these walls. This was countered by the explanation that this only occurs when local initiatives are not sustained and so there is a return to illegal graffiti writing after the projects are completed.¹⁵
- 4.18 The creation of more community notice boards is suggested as an alternative to fly-posting, and young people considered this would reduce fly-posting whilst providing information to those interested. It is recognised that some venues are more likely to find fly-posting useful than others: “smaller venues like [name deleted], they cannot really afford to have the big proper billboards and stuff, so how are they supposed to advertise their stuff?”
- 4.19 The potential success of the approach of providing alternative legal sites was backed by evidence submitted to the Assembly’s earlier investigation on graffiti:
We know that the introduction of a number of legal poster boards around the city centre has virtually eliminated indiscriminate fly-posting.¹⁶

Recommendation 5

Local authorities, with the support of the Association of London Government and central Government, should consider feasibility studies to assess the effectiveness of legal poster and graffiti sites within London, with due regard to previous experiences which have not always proved positive.

Physical measures

- 4.20 Young people are aware of various physical measures to prevent ‘Envirocrime’, but had different opinions about their effectiveness. When considering how to reduce

¹⁵ p39 Graffiti in London, London Assembly Graffiti Investigative Committee. May 2002

¹⁶ Bradford metropolitan District Council. Information provided to Graffiti scrutiny, winter 2001.

the number of abandoned vehicles and the linked crime of joyriding, the following are thought useful measures: lighting, gates, bollards, speed bumps.

- 4.21 However when talking about gates in relation to fly-tipping it is considered that this may not work because “round here they would dump stuff outside the gates”.
- 4.22 Lighting has been stated as an important preventative measure, particularly by those living in the suburbs. Young people from our work also felt that better lighting would reduce street crime.
- 4.23 CCTV as preventative measure is thought useful primarily in terms of its ability to improve enforcement and the threat of such enforcement. Views on the effectiveness of CCTV have been noted in paragraph 4.14 above.
- 4.24 The limitations of physical measures were recognised during the Designing out Crime seminar hosted by the Environment Committee on 4 December 2003 and during the evidentiary hearing:

I think the point that seems to come to the surface for me is that it is a balance of deterrent and somehow influencing an increased sense of responsibility among all of us ... CCTV, along with gates and sensors and security shutters and those kind of measures ... I think are in some ways temporary measures.¹⁷

Vibrant communities

- 4.25 The importance of having people around in the street as natural crime prevention arose at the evidentiary hearing as well as during the Designing Out Crime seminar mentioned above. One participant, who lived on an estate known as a close-knit area, cited the number of adults around on her estate as the reason for her feeling safe. This need for people on the street covered the police, wardens, and the public.

One of the most important things in any kind of anti-social behaviour, or anything you do not want to be going on, is surveillance. Having people on the street, having adults around, and that is something that has come up again and again in our research, that having sympathetic adults and not necessarily supervising, but just being around makes young people feel safer and would also deter ... [unwanted] activities.¹⁸

- 4.26 A feeling of safety is not only increased by adult supervision, whether formal or informal, but also the importance of different groups knowing each other. This is though important for both adults and children.

adults have been living there for so many generations and they know all the young people and they work together in getting things done for their area ... they feel quite secure in their area¹⁹

Street Wardens

- 4.27 Wardens were discussed by a number of the focus groups. They are generally considered effective e.g. “it kind of helped because there used to be a lot of car fires and everything like that ... and then there was less and less car fires as time went by” “make your estate better, they tell people this car’s got no tax on it, they catch people graffiti-ing, stuff like that, stop beef [fights]”.
- 4.28 However there are criticisms: “I’ve got them on my estate, they hardly come out”, “they don’t even try and bring us out of the block [following complaints], they just

¹⁷ Dan Jones, The Glasshouse. Oral Evidence 4 February 2004.

¹⁸ Louisa Neuberger The Glasshouse

¹⁹ Suzannah Gayle, Groundwork Southwark. Oral Evidence 4 February 2004.

walk away” “they didn’t even come and introduce themselves to us, but they come and tell us to do this and do that”. “Many street wardens lack social skills, like they do not know how to talk to the people that live in the area; they do not know how to socialise with them, so then they are seen as outsiders ... they are seen as a threat and the youth or the people in the area will not communicate with them, and therefore there is no point in them being there because nothing is being achieved.”

- 4.29 There are also suggestions for how the warden schemes could be improved. “I’d like them to be our age, [late teens] or a little bit older”, “it would be cool if you could have someone different who could relate to you”. Young people have suggestions on how wardens could be more effective: “don’t be a bully, because if you’re bossing them around you’re gonna make them do what you’re telling them not to do”.
- 4.30 Some local authorities are looking at youth warden schemes as a way of getting young people to get to know the wardens in their area. Swindon, South Tyneside and Southampton have already introduced initiatives of this kind and it would be interesting to see how these develop. Young people in our study had identified the possibility of mini-summer jobs that could be integrated into junior warden schemes.
- 4.31 Some participants had been involved in selecting youth workers for the projects they were involved in. They suggest that this approach could be extended to street wardens to improve the connections with them to young people in the area.

Recommendation 6

Local authorities and registered social landlords should identify how to involve young people in the introduction and management of street warden schemes and related initiatives. Job descriptions for street wardens should address the social skills and approach needed to engage with the young people in the area.

- 4.32 The Step Change programme for London’s police service will introduce new teams of ward-based community officers who will focus on issues of concern to local residents. The pilots for this programme would be an excellent opportunity to develop how young people are involved with community policing, building on existing initiatives such as work in schools. The Metropolitan Police Authority has committed that officers will not be moved from their community roles to other activities.

Recommendation 7

The Committee supports the introduction of the Metropolitan Police Service Step Change programme of new teams of ward-based community officers, who will focus on issues of concern to local residents. The pilots of these programmes should develop mechanisms to specifically address the concerns of young people and ensure their constructive involvement with this programme.

Reporting envirocrime

- 4.33 Young people suggest that it should be easier to report incidences of ‘Envirocrime’ by providing well advertised freephone numbers displayed in their local areas, and that financial incentives might be useful in encouraging people to report ‘Envirocrime’.

5 Involving young people in regeneration

- 5.1 When young people are involved in the regeneration of an area, case studies have found that the improvements to an area are more likely to be sustained. Work has also showed that there are wider community and personal benefits. An example was the 'Families in Focus' initiative in Amptill Square, Camden. Research by the community showed that graffiti and litter were cut by 70% and that other forms of anti-social behaviour were also lower than estates with a similar profile²⁰.
- 5.2 Some participants in our research had been involved in planning regeneration projects for open spaces in their area, creating new football pitches in both cases. "We are planning to build a football pitch, and we have asked other people in the groups' opinion." "we have a similar project to that as well, where we actually got to design the layout of two parks and a football pitch as well. It is nearly completed but is on the, I think, third stage now. It worked quite well." Those involved had enjoyed the experience and were positive about its success.
- 5.3 Young people recognised the importance of reducing the amount of derelict open space and ensuring that public space was well-designed for its purpose: "*don't have so many open spaces doing nothing*". Some open spaces, particularly in housing estates, has no specific purpose and so is not used constructively by anyone. Young people highlight this as likely to increase fly-tipping.
- 5.4 However those involved with youth participation in regeneration projects did have concerns that the changes on which young people were consulted were limited.
- Young people are often asked about play spaces and open space, but they are not actually asked about the direct layout, where the actual houses and flats are being built, and that is often more important in relation to the issues around community safety.²¹
- 5.5 It is clear that for young people, as for adults, the agencies which regenerate areas must be realistic about what they promise to those involved in consultations, and they must be honest about how likely it is that ideas are taken forward.
- The frustration of young people, that keeps coming up again and again, is young people are asked for their opinions and then nothing happens with that. Nothing is fed back to those young people. Therefore they become completely disillusioned with actually getting involved in future consultations.²²
- 5.6 It was useful for the Committee to be able to hear about work from the good practice guide by The Glasshouse for CAGE Space. Whilst this will concentrate on regeneration of open space, lessons will clearly be more widely applicable. This work is due to be completed in Spring 2004.
- 5.7 One of the findings from this work is that projects should not just be one-off interventions. This both ensures that there is continued involvement from young people and that new people are drawn in as they grow up.
- I think that building in ongoing involvements to any project is really important ... Maintenance is an ongoing issue and involving young people in ongoing management and maintenance of public spaces is really vital, not necessarily always in really formal committees, but all sorts of ways and getting young people to feel like it is their space,

²⁰ Information from the Home Office website, cited in Envirocrime Children and Neighbourhoods in London, (2004)

²¹ Fiona Side, Children and Neighbourhoods in London. Oral evidence, 4 February 2004.

²² Fiona Side, *ibid*.

as though 'I am sharing a space with adults' and not feeling excluded from those areas.²³

- 5.8 A further point was that youth participation is more effective when it builds on existing work and draws on established relationships. Obviously this may not be possible in all areas, but this does highlight the need for projects to be more than single interventions.

When you have design projects going on, all the most successful work has gone in is where they have worked with loads of youth services, and where the most successful projects have taken place has been where the youth services have been really strong, where there has been really good adults locally who know the kids and who have spent a long time building up a relationship with them.²⁴

- 5.9 The Glasshouse also found that there were practical problems in involving young people in regeneration projects.

Another barrier is often timescales. It does take time to involve people in a meaningful way and you cannot just go to one meeting with young people and think that you know exactly what they think and that is it, you have consulted young people and you do not need to involve them any more.²⁵

- 5.10 A final point raised during our research is that organisations which seek to involve young people, particularly in regeneration projects, should consider their own motivation. If they are not genuine about the advantages from this participation its effectiveness will be reduced.

Organisations who do not generally involve young people [may] want to start involving them, because it has been proven that it is a good idea, that it does help young people take pride and ownership over their area and so on. I think the organisations that are going to be involving young people need to be active listeners and need to make sure that, when they do consult with young people, that they really are doing it because they want to get their opinions, not because it is seen to be a good thing.²⁶

Recommendation 8

Local authorities, development companies and registered social landlords should involve young people in regeneration projects in a systematic way that is central to the implementation of such projects.

²³ Louisa Neuberger, The Glasshouse. Oral evidence, 4 February 2004.

²⁴ Louisa Neuberger, *ibid.*

²⁵ Louisa Neuberger, *ibid.*

²⁶ Natalie Callaghan, Children and Neighbourhoods in London. Oral evidence, 4 February 2004.

Annex A – List of Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Education campaigns aimed at young people must involve them in the design of such campaigns so that appropriate methods and messages are used to create constructive peer pressure to deliver the campaign objectives.

Recommendation 2

Schools at both primary and secondary levels must address problems of the street environment, such as litter and graffiti, at the core of school activities through the national curriculum and other mechanisms. The Committee welcomes the extension of the Mayor's London Schools Environment Award to secondary level as one mechanism for this and would also highlight the work of the Metropolitan Police Service and the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority in schools and youth groups.

Recommendation 3

The Mayor, particularly through joint working by the Children and Young People's Unit and Environment teams, should ensure that the implementation of his waste strategies and work on street cleanliness addresses the ideas and concerns of young people.

Recommendation 4

Local authorities and central government must ensure that initiatives to tackle street crime and anti-social behaviour by young people support youth provision, of specific diversionary activities and of supervised and unsupervised areas, as an integrated and essential part of such initiatives.

Recommendation 5

Local authorities, with the support of the Association of London Government and central Government, should consider feasibility studies to assess the effectiveness of legal poster and graffiti sites within London, with due regard to previous experiences which have not always proved positive.

Recommendation 6

Local authorities and registered social landlords should identify how to involve young people in the introduction and management of street warden schemes and related initiatives. Job descriptions for street wardens should address the social skills and approach needed to engage with the young people in the area.

Recommendation 7

The Committee supports the introduction of the Metropolitan Police Service Step Change programme of new teams of ward-based community officers, who will focus on issues of concern to local residents. The pilots of these programmes should develop mechanisms to specifically address the concerns of young people and ensure their constructive involvement with this programme.

Recommendation 8

Local authorities, development companies and registered social landlords should involve young people throughout the development of regeneration projects in a systematic way that is central to the implementation of those projects.

Annex B – Evidence

To obtain the evidence listed below, please e-mail anna.malos@london.gov.uk

Written evidence

The Committee commissioned consultants to produce a report to:

- Canvass young people's views on: the issues of litter, graffiti, fly-posting, fly-tipping and abandoned vehicles; existing initiatives to tackle these issues and suggestions for new initiatives.
- Review relevant research on young people to set these views in context

The Committee based its final report on their findings, which are available to the public in electronic form at no cost.

Children and Neighbourhoods in London can be contacted at:

St Hilda's East Community Centre

18 Club Row

London

E2 7EY

Tel: 020 7613 4107

Email: cin@childrenssociety.org.uk

Oral Evidence

The Committee held an evidentiary hearing on 4 February 2004 with the following attendees:

Louisa Neuburger, The Glass-House, Consultants to CAGE Space

Dan Jones, The Glass-House, Consultants to CAGE Space

Fiona Side, Children and Neighbourhoods in London, The Children's Society

Natalie Callaghan, Children and Neighbourhoods in London, The Children's Society

David Laird, Children and Neighbourhoods in London, The Children's Society

Dionne Farley: Children's Society funded project in Abbey Wood.

Suzannah Gayle, Groundwork Southwark

Focus group participants:

Daniel Oteng, Children and Neighbourhoods in London, The Children's Society

Lavinia Acheampong, Children and Neighbourhoods in London, The Children's Society

Stephanie Fyfe, Abbey Wood School.

Natalie Ademakinwa, Red Hot Green, Camden

Jack Bond, Red Hot Green, Camden

Abby Humphreys, Groundwork Southwark

Kichelle Morrison, Groundwork Southwark

A transcript of the hearing can be downloaded from:

www.london.gov.uk/assembly/envmtgs/index.jsp

Bibliography

Campbell S and Harrington V. 2000. Youth crime: Findings from the 1998/99 Youth Lifestyles Survey, Home office research findings 209.

London Assembly Graffiti Investigative Committee. May 2002 Graffiti in London

NSPCC (2002) Building a strategy for children and young people: what children and young people told the NSPCC

Thames Valley Police 2002. Youth Shelters and Sports systems – a good Practice Guide

Annex C – Orders and translations

How to order

For further information on this report or to order a copy, please contact Anna Malos, Assistant Scrutiny Manager, on 020 7983 4207 or email to anna.malos@london.gov.uk

See it for free on our website - You can also view and download a copy of this report at: <http://www.london.gov.uk/assembly/reports/>

Large print, Braille or translations

If you, or someone you know, needs a copy of this report in large print or Braille, or a copy of the summary and main findings in another language, then please call us on 020 7983 4100 or email to assembly.translations@london.gov.uk

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Annex D – Principles of Scrutiny

The powers of the London Assembly include power to investigate and report on decisions and actions of the Mayor, or on matters relating to the principal purposes of the Greater London Authority, and on any other matters which the Assembly considers to be of importance to Londoners. In the conduct of scrutiny and investigation the Assembly abides by a number of principles.

Scrutinies:

- aim to recommend action to achieve improvements;
- are conducted with objectivity and independence;
- examine all aspects of the Mayor's strategies;
- consult widely, having regard to issues of timeliness and cost;
- are conducted in a constructive and positive manner; and
- are conducted with an awareness of the need to spend taxpayers money wisely and well.

More information about scrutiny work of the London Assembly, including published reports, details of committee meetings and contact information, can be found on the London Assembly web page at www.london.gov.uk/assembly.