

## **Response to the Mayor's Draft Children and Young People's Strategy**

A Report from the  
Children and Young People's Strategy Investigative Committee  
July 2003



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**Greater London Authority  
July 2003**

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## Chair's Foreword



The Assembly's Children and Young Persons Strategy Investigative Committee has carried out its work on a cross-party basis and I am grateful to my fellow committee members for their commitment. I would also like to thank all the individuals and groups who gave so generously of their time and knowledge to the committee. In particular I would personally like to thank the young people from the East London foyer network who were so open in their views about living in London.

We found that the draft strategy contains an overview of many of the issues that affect children and young people in the capital. However the Committee found that the scope of the proposals needed to be clearly defined. Generally the Mayor's blueprint to tackle poverty and deprivation among young Londoners lacks clear goals and fails to establish priorities or demonstrate how he intends to take action.

At the moment, the Mayor's plan is a mixture of the very general and some detailed proposals, but where there are specifics, these are skewed more towards services over which the Mayor has some power or direct influence like public transport and policing. The strategy needs to be clear on whether this strategy is a GLA Strategy only covering the GLA family or is a pan-London multi-agency strategy with the Mayor providing a strategic lead.

There has been unanimous support for the aims and visions of this strategy and while Ken can talk the talk, he now needs to prove he can walk the walk. He must establish clear goals, set priorities, outline precisely what he intends to do and how he intends to achieve it. When he comes back with his final report, that is what we will be looking for. It will be interesting to see how he will turn his laudable wish list into a practical action plan - that is his challenge.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Diana R Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'D' and 'J'.

**Diana Johnson AM**  
**Chair of the Children and Young People's Strategy Committee**  
31 July 2003

# **The Children and Young People's Strategy Investigative Committee**

The London Assembly established the Children and Young People's Strategy Committee on 7 May 2003, to respond on behalf of the Assembly to the Mayor's draft Children and Young People's Strategy.

At its first meeting, on 5 June 2003, the Committee agreed to focus its scrutiny on the following three key questions, in addition to reviewing the policy proposals contained in the strategy:

1. How should the GLA seek to implement the strategy?
2. How should the GLA seek to engage productively and effectively with children and young people? What would be the value and role of the proposed Youth Forum?
3. What should be the objectives / role of the GLA Children and Young People's Unit, and what should be its priorities for action in the short term?

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The members of the Committee are:

Diana Johnson (Chair), Labour  
Tony Arbour (Conservative)  
Samantha Heath (Labour)

Jenny Jones (Green)  
Bob Neill (Conservative)  
Graham Tope (Liberal Democrat)

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## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Mayor published his draft Children and Young People's Strategy, *Towards a Child-Friendly London*, in April 2003. The draft Strategy ranges over all aspects of policy in London, and calls for children's and young people's interests and needs to be integrated into policy- and decision-making throughout London government. The draft Strategy has been supported by non-governmental organisations, not least by the Office of the Children's Rights Commissioner for London (OCRCL), which operated for three years from 2000 to 2003. It is the first strategic review of issues and policies affecting children and young people across London, and as such it represents a significant step towards the vision of a child-friendly city that we all share.
- 1.2 The London Assembly agreed in May 2003 to establish a cross-party investigative committee to respond to the draft Strategy. At the same time, the Mayor has been consulting widely on the contents of the draft Strategy. The Committee wanted to ensure that its response added value to the responses submitted by individuals and organisations to the Mayor. With this in mind, we agreed to focus our investigation on the following key questions:
  - a. How should the GLA seek to implement the Strategy?
  - b. How should the GLA seek to engage productively and effectively with children and young people? What would be the value and role of the proposed Young Londoners' Forum?
  - c. What should be the objectives and role of the GLA's new Children and Young People's Unit, and what should be its priorities for action in the short term?
- 1.3 We wrote to a large number of individuals and organisations to ask them for their views on these issues. On 24 June, we visited two foyer organisations which provide temporary supported housing to young homeless people in London, run by Network East Foyers. On 7 July 2003, we asked children and young people participating in the Environment Committee's youth conference<sup>1</sup> to respond to a short questionnaire. On 10 July, we held a meeting at City Hall with Caroline Boswell, former Director of the Office of the Children's Rights Commissioner for London, who is leading the Mayor's consultation on the draft Strategy; Jason Lever from the NSPCC; Adrian Voces from London Play; Gary Mackenzie from the Children's Society; and Sue Emerson from Save the Children Fund UK.
- 1.4 We also received written evidence from individuals and organisations. A list of those who gave written evidence is attached at Annex B to this Report. All this evidence has been very useful and informative, and we are grateful to all those who gave their time and effort to contribute to our investigation.

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<sup>1</sup> Held on 7 July 2003 at City Hall. For details, refer to [www.london.gov.uk/assembly](http://www.london.gov.uk/assembly)



## **2 The value of a children and young people's strategy for London**

- 2.1 The evidence we received as part of our investigation was unanimous in its support for a children and young people's strategy for London. Children and young people under the age of 18 are not able to take part in the democratic process by voting in elections, so they have a particular need to have their views and needs represented in government. Under-18s also have specific rights that should be acknowledged and enforced, as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is important that government policies and actions reflect these rights.
- 2.2 The Government is in the process of developing a national strategy, but we heard convincing arguments in favour of London having its own children and young people's strategy to complement national policies. The UN International Child-Friendly Cities Secretariat recently published a 'conceptual framework', *Building Child-Friendly Cities*, which places the need for city strategies as a priority among the actions that are necessary to achieve the vision of child-friendly cities - that is, cities where children's rights are respected and their views and needs are taken into account in all matters that affect them.
- 2.3 There are 1.62 million children and young people in London - over a fifth of the population.<sup>2</sup> The characteristics of and problems facing London's children and young people differ in important ways from those of children and young people nationally; most importantly, there is a higher incidence of poverty and deprivation amongst London's under-18 population than the rest of the country, and the population is much more diverse than elsewhere in the UK, as well as being more diverse than London's adult population.<sup>3</sup>
- 2.4 Caroline Boswell, who is leading the Mayor's consultation on the draft Strategy, told the Committee, 'children in London do face particular issues and challenges, which have been noted in relation to safe streets [and] safe places to play. There are very high levels of inequality in London, particularly very high levels of child poverty in inner London, for example'.<sup>4</sup> Adrian Vokes, Director of London Play, said, 'children and young people in London are a special case with the very high levels of poverty and the particular problems of a big urban environment'. He added that, 'the fact of the GLA itself, and the regional powers that have been delegated or given to the Mayor's office and the GLA, makes it important that there is a Children and Young People's Strategy in order to fully inform those other strategies'.<sup>5</sup>
- 2.5 We welcome the publication of the Mayor's draft Children and Young People's Strategy. It is an important step towards ensuring that the rights of children are integrated into policy- and decision-making in London. We look forward to its further development and, crucially, its implementation.

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• • <sup>2</sup> Draft Children and Young People's Strategy, p. 5

• • <sup>3</sup> Draft Children and Young People's Strategy, p. 6

<sup>4</sup> Minutes of Committee Meeting, 10 July 2003, p. 3

<sup>5</sup> Minutes of Committee Meeting, 10 July 2003, p. 4

### 3 Issues covered in the draft Strategy

- 3.1 The draft Strategy is well-grounded in research and consultation, including a range of consultations with children and young people, most notably the OCRCL's consultation with over 2,000 children and young people, *Sort it Out*.<sup>6</sup> The draft Strategy also builds on an earlier study, *The State of London's Children*,<sup>7</sup> which for the first time brought together information on the particular characteristics of London's under-18 population.
- 3.2 The draft Strategy was produced in close collaboration with key non-governmental organisations working in London, and has the credibility of having been developed by the independent OCRCL, rather than by any particular government agency. The then Deputy Mayor, Nicky Gavron AM, led a steering group in the development of the draft Strategy. Adrian Voce, Director of London Play, said the development of the draft Strategy had been 'a model of good practice in terms of working with children and young people from top to bottom and fully engaging with them and their concerns in the formulation of policy'.<sup>8</sup>
- 3.3 As a result, the draft Strategy is thorough and comprehensive in its coverage of the issues that affect children and young people in the capital. The Government's Children and Young People's Unit told us, 'the draft Strategy has broad coverage of the important aspects of children's and young people's lives'.<sup>9</sup> The ALG agreed with this analysis, stating that it 'welcomes the development of a draft Strategy and finds it a useful document in bringing together the various strands of the Mayor's work that impact on children'.<sup>10</sup> Tom Wylie, Chief Executive of the National Youth Agency, wrote of the Agency's 'overall approval of the thought and underlying philosophy that has helped to create this draft strategy'.<sup>11</sup>
- 3.4 The value of this bringing together of information and analysis at a London-wide level is in itself significant and useful. But the draft strategy rightly attempts to go further than this, by identifying policies and actions that should be put in place to achieve the Mayor's vision of a child-friendly city.
- 3.5 The draft Strategy sets out the Mayor's vision for a child-friendly London, summarised in four over-arching objectives:
- To put children and young people's rights and best interests at the heart of policy-making in the capital;
  - To tackle child poverty and poverty-related inequalities;
  - To promote inclusion and equality amongst London's children and young people;
  - To ensure a greater voice for London's children and young people and improved opportunities for their systematic participation in decision-

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<sup>6</sup> Office of the Children's Rights Commissioner for London, April 2001

• • <sup>7</sup> Office of the Children's Rights Commissioner for London, February 2002

<sup>8</sup> Minutes of Committee Meeting, 10 July 2003, p. 2

<sup>9</sup> Written evidence from CYP, p. 1

<sup>10</sup> Written evidence from the ALG, p. 1

<sup>11</sup> Written evidence from Tom Wylie, National Youth Agency Chief Executive

making.<sup>12</sup>

- 3.6 These goals are underpinned by an explanation of the Mayor's understanding of the meaning of a child-friendly city, and a set of core values.<sup>13</sup> The Mayor's vision of a child-friendly city<sup>14</sup> includes all the elements we would expect to see. The vision closely reflects the definition of a child-friendly city set out by the UN Child-Friendly City Secretariat in its recently published conceptual framework.<sup>15</sup> The evidence we received was also fully supportive of the Mayor's vision.
- 3.7 We fully support the Mayor's vision of a child-friendly city, as set out in the draft Strategy.

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• • <sup>12</sup> draft Strategy, p. 3

• • <sup>13</sup> draft Strategy, p. 3

<sup>14</sup> draft Strategy, pp. 17-18

<sup>15</sup> June 2003

## **4 Implementation: Objectives, Policies, Proposals and Actions**

- 4.1 We have welcomed the production of the strategy, its philosophy and analysis. However, the value of the strategy, and the achievement of its objectives, will ultimately depend on its effective implementation. The UN Child-Friendly Cities Secretariat's conceptual framework states that city strategies should 'go beyond statements of policy and principle, to set real and achievable targets in relation to the full range of economic, social and cultural and civil and political rights for children. It must be more than a list of good intentions; it must include a description of the process of implementation for all children in the city'.<sup>16</sup> Gary Mackenzie from The Children's Society said, 'in terms of the implementation, if it is going to have an impact on children and young people's lives, then we do have to be quite rigorous and quite wide-ranging in where the strategy works and how it works. Otherwise, I think it is just going to be another document'.<sup>17</sup>
- 4.2 We agree with this statement, and we have focused our scrutiny work on questions relating to how the various policies proposed in the strategy will be implemented so as to make a difference to the lives of London's children and young people.
- 4.3 The draft Strategy contains a range of policies, objectives, proposals and 'Action Plans', and we expect that the Mayor's consultation will have yielded responses to each of these. We discuss some of these later in this Report. But before these are addressed, it needs to be made much clearer what each of these actually means, and what is the relative status of each category of statement. As the ALG pointed out in its evidence to our investigation,<sup>18</sup> there are also statements of intent within the text of the strategy that are not reflected in numbered proposals or policies - what is the status of these?
- 4.4 In the draft Strategy, there is a lack of explanation as to *how* many of the proposals will be executed in practice - there are lots of phrases like "seek to ensure", "lobby", "facilitate", "support", "put in place mechanisms" - these don't tell us anything about what is actually going to be done. They are aims, rather than practical proposals. The ALG noted in its written evidence that 'the most notable gaps in the strategy relate to the specification of its scope and plans for implementation'.<sup>19</sup> The ALG wrote that information on 'how the vast array of policies and proposals will be prioritised and what the timetable for implementation will be ... would help to ground some of the more aspirational policy statements and provide a clearer idea of what tangible results London might expect to see'.<sup>20</sup>
- 4.5 The UN's conceptual framework also makes this point, arguing the case for 'specific priorities and time-limited goals'.<sup>21</sup> To this, we would add a further request - actions should be costed as far as possible. This adds weight to commitments to action, and can encourage a 'real-life' approach to planning, as opposed to the temptation to produce aspirational or unaffordable 'wish lists'.

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<sup>16</sup> UN conceptual framework, p. 8

<sup>17</sup> Minutes of Committee Meeting, 10 July 2003, p. 3

<sup>18</sup> Written evidence from the Association of London Government

<sup>19</sup> Written evidence from the ALG, p. 2

<sup>20</sup> Written evidence from the ALG, p. 2

<sup>21</sup> UN conceptual framework.

- 4.6 Where there are more tangible proposals, it is often the case that further detail is needed on how they will be implemented. For example, the draft Strategy highlights the Mayor's intention to establish a Children and Young People's Unit to 'take forward the ongoing development, implementation and monitoring of the Children and Young People's Strategy',<sup>22</sup> but there is no real indication of what sort of work this might involve. We discuss the sort of work we would like to see the Unit doing later in this Report.
- 4.7 The document also highlights issues which are not then taken forward into formal 'proposals' or 'policies'. A key example of this is the strategy's analysis of the need for information-gathering about the ongoing problems facing London's children, and how these are affected by policies and measures over time.

*Recommendations 1 and 2*

**We recommend that the final strategy contain clear guidance on the meaning and status of the various terms used to describe its proposals and commitments (including 'objectives', 'policies', 'proposals', actions and unclassified commitments). As far as possible, statements of intention or policy should be supported by commitments to practical actions.**

**We further recommend that the final strategy should contain a summary of proposals, as was included in the Mayor's Culture Strategy, showing what action is to be taken and when, and who is to lead on it.**

- 4.8 The work plan for the Children and Young People's Unit will depend largely on the order of priority placed upon the various policies and proposals contained in the final strategy. The draft Strategy does not contain any clear indication of the order of priority of the policies and proposals it contains, either in terms of timing or political or practical priority. The ALG pointed to the need for clear prioritisation and action plans to manage expectations and enable progress to be measured against the plans. We agree with this analysis, and we believe that a clear statement of priorities is also necessary if the final strategy is to act as guidance to policy- and decision-makers within and outside the GLA family.

*Recommendation 3*

**We recommend that the final strategy make clear the order of priority of the proposals, and include a three-year action plan for their implementation. This should include clear milestones and 'deliverables; against which progress can be measured over time. This should make clear the expected outcomes of the various actions that are proposed, and provide a robust basis for holding the Mayor to account against his plans and commitments.**

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<sup>22</sup> draft Strategy, p. 103

- 4.9 The written submission we received from NGOs suggested that the GLA should focus on actions that are within its statutory powers and areas of responsibility, such as child pedestrian safety and play provision within new housing developments.<sup>23</sup> NGOs argued at the same time that the GLA should take ‘joint responsibility’ for those actions that require joint working with other agencies. The ALG said, ‘the Mayor will most effectively add value by focusing on those areas within his statutory remit and working in partnership with boroughs and other agencies where responsibilities overlap’.<sup>24</sup> As we stated earlier, we think the final strategy should make clear who is responsible for each of the actions that are planned. We believe there is also a clear rationale for the Mayor prioritising actions that he can take within his own powers.
- 4.10 We would also argue strongly that the Mayor should take fully into account the findings of all the consultations that have taken place with children and young people, during the development of and consultation on this strategy, but also in relation to other strategies and by other agencies. It will be important to demonstrate in the final strategy that the priorities it sets out reflect the concerns and ideas of children and young people themselves. The section of this Report entitled ‘the local environment’ proposes that the Mayor demonstrate that he is responding to the concerns of children and young people by placing the local environment high on his agenda.
- 4.11 In our view, the first priority should be to establish the proposed Children and Young People’s Unit within the GLA to take forward the strategy’s further development and implementation. Among the various proposals contained within the draft Strategy, the top priority should, in our view, be the establishment of ongoing mechanisms for genuine and meaningful consultation with children and young people on the range of the GLA family’s policies and services.

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<sup>23</sup> Written evidence from NSPCC, SCF(UK), London Play and The Children’s Society, p. 1

<sup>24</sup> Written evidence from the ALG, p. 2

## **5 Engaging children and young people in policy- and decision-making: A Young Londoners' Forum?**

- 5.1 The first priority of the new GLA Children and Young People's Unit, in our view, should be to put in place mechanisms for the ongoing involvement of children in policy- and decision-making in London, rather than emphasising one-off or self-contained interventions to improve particular aspects of children and young people's lives. The draft Strategy proposes the establishment of a 'young Londoners' forum' for this purpose.
- 5.2 This implies a formal committee-style meeting of young people, although it was clear in our discussions with Caroline Boswell, who is leading the Mayor's consultation on his draft Strategy, that this was not necessarily the intention. We are pleased to hear this, although of course formal meetings might form one aspect of future work by the GLA to engage with London's children and young people. However, we would encourage the GLA to look at more imaginative ways of consulting children and young people, such as the methods that have been demonstrated by the Office of the Children's Rights Commissioner for London. This might include, for example, use of information and communications technology such as e-mail, websites and text messaging. It is crucial that a range of tools are used if any consultation is to reach as many of London's children and young people as possible.
- 5.3 The evidence we received raised a range of interesting points about how to consult children and young people in a meaningful way. Among the many issues that must be taken into account in developing consultation mechanisms for children and young people, we would highlight the following:
- a. The consultation activity must have a clear purpose.
  - b. There must be clear feedback, and evidence that the views of the young people are being taken seriously.
  - c. Any consultation mechanism for children and young people should be targeted at consulting particular groups of children and young people who are likely to be affected by a particular policy question or decision.
  - d. Any consultation activities should take clear steps to attract the participation of children from equalities target groups.
  - e. There should be a range of activities, rather than just one mechanism, for children and young people to participate in policy- and decision-making.
  - f. Consultation with children and young people should not be restricted to services directed specifically at them.
- 5.4 There are several elements to effective consultation with children and young people, which we see as covering a broad range of activities. We would of course like to see the Mayor consulting young people fully and as a matter of course on his draft strategies, and on other significant policy proposals, as well as providing opportunities for children and young people to put forward their own ideas.

- 5.5 As a first principle, we consider that consultation must be done and policies formed on the basis of robust information about the impact of the GLA's work on children and young people, and the problems faced by children and young people in the city.

*Consultation with children and young people about their lives and the problems they face*

- 5.6 The draft Strategy acknowledges the value of the baseline information collated in the *State of London's Children Report*.<sup>25</sup> However, the draft Strategy states that there remain 'gaps in the availability of child-focused information on young Londoners' lives [and] little systematic monitoring on a London-wide level of the outcomes for children, or assessment of the longer-term trends in relation to inequalities between children and as a group in London'.<sup>26</sup> The draft Strategy puts forward some options for action in this regard, but no actual proposal is made. We note, however, that the programme budget of £105,000 for the GLA Children and Young People's Unit includes £10,000 for the production of a further State of London's Children Report.

*Recommendation 4*

**We welcome the allocation of GLA funds to the production of a State of London's Children Report. The GLA is well-placed to play an information-gathering role at a London-wide level. We recommend that this research be carried out as a priority once the new Children and Young People's Unit is set up.**

*Collating and Disseminating Information*

- 5.7 An important element of genuine consultation is the production and dissemination of appropriate information about the activities and policies of the Authority *to* children and young people as well as *about* them. The production of a child-friendly version of the draft Strategy is a good precedent, and we understand it has yielded a good crop of responses from children and young people. Caroline Boswell told us that a number of schools have facilitated children's responses as part of their IT courses.

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<sup>25</sup> Office for the Children's Rights Commissioner for London

<sup>26</sup> draft Strategy, p. 101



*Recommendations 5 and 6*

**We recommend the Mayor produce child-friendly summaries of all his statutory strategies, in the same way as alternative language formats and large-print versions are made available to other equalities target groups. These should be produced in consultation with schools, to ensure that advantage is taken of opportunities to make the documents useable as part of the citizenship or IT curriculums.**

**We further recommend that the volume and nature of responses to these documents be monitored to establish whether there are target groups among children and young people that may need to be more actively consulted.**

- 5.8 There is of course a range of tools for communicating with children and young people, and we would wish to see the GLA leading the way in developing more effective methods. The main conduit for the Mayor to communicate directly with Londoners on a large scale is his publication, *The Londoner*. Non-governmental organisations suggested to us that this publication could usefully contain a child-friendly supplement, providing information on policies that will affect them, consultation and participation opportunities, and outcomes from previous consultations. Given that *The Londoner* is already produced, we would expect that this could be done cost-effectively.

*Recommendation 7*

**We recommend that the Mayor give consideration to the proposal that future editions of *The Londoner* include a child-friendly supplement containing key information about relevant policies, events, participation opportunities and outcomes from previous consultations. The effectiveness of this method of disseminating information among young Londoners should be monitored over time to ensure it is reaching the intended audience.**

- 5.9 The draft Strategy proposes the development of a children and young people's website. Given the higher proportion of young people who are able to use the internet, this would seem to be a positive suggestion, although there is always a question as to how to attract children and young people to the website, or even bring it to their attention. One possible solution might be to produce materials that can be used in schools as part of the national curriculum for citizenship or IT.
- 5.10 Some ideas put forward to us for the website included:
- a. Act as a portal to child-led and child-based sites.

- b. Act as a source of information on opportunities to participate in policy- and decision-making. Bernice Glatt said, 'young people's ignorance on how to participate in debates and decision-making is a barrier [to their greater involvement], so is inappropriate dissemination of information. More information directed to the right audience is needed to make them proactive and generate trust'.<sup>27</sup>
- c. Info on facilities / child-friendly restaurants, tourist attractions etc.
- d. Provide a discussion board for active participation, rather than children and young people always having to be responsive.
- e. Information about how children and young people's interests are being taken into account, outcomes from consultations, impact assessments, child audits, children's budget, etc.
- f. Ray Bellas, a Youth and Community Worker, argued that 'young people must be allowed and be trusted to totally run' any young Londoner's forum.<sup>28</sup> Young people must, at the least, be closely involved in the design and content of the website.

**5.11** There are already opportunities for young Londoners to take part in key debates and decisions that affect them (for example, schools councils, borough-level children's forums). One key issue seems to be that, rather than a lack of opportunity for debate, many young Londoners either don't know how to engage, or don't want to. NGOs suggested to us that the GLA could play a useful role as a repository of information about consultation opportunities across London. The NSPCC suggested that the GLA's proposed website for children and young people could usefully provide access to this information.

*Recommendation 8*

**We recommend that the GLA commission an audit of current opportunities for children and young people to participate in decision-making and policy formulation.**

**5.12** As well as inviting children and young people to respond to the Mayor's consultations, the GLA could also carry out useful exercises to establish the impact of its current activities on children and young people. For example, the UN conceptual framework suggests that a useful tool for analysing the 'inputs' of city government in relation to children and young people is the production of a children and young people's budget. This would analyse GLA expenditure (and possibly expenditure by other relevant bodies) to assess what proportion of expenditure is directed towards children and young people. Again, it may not be cost-effective for the GLA to carry out such analysis annually. However, as a tool for baseline assessment and ongoing monitoring, we consider it could be a useful exercise if conducted once during each Mayoral term.

<sup>27</sup> Written evidence from Bernice Glatt

<sup>28</sup> Written evidence from Ray Bellas

*Recommendation 9*

**We recommend that the GLA take the lead in the production of a children's budget for London, analysing the proportion and nature of expenditure that is in line with the objectives of the Children and Young People's Strategy. This should be done once during each Mayoral term.**

*Analysing GLA Policies and Expenditure*

- 5.13 The other side of this coin is information about what the GLA is doing, and how it is affecting children and young people. Evidence we received suggested that it would be useful to establish a programme of assessments of existing policies and expenditure through a process of 'child audit' and impact assessments, and the production of a children's budget for London.
- 5.14 The UN conceptual framework highlights the importance of analysing policies to assess their impact on children and young people. We consider that it could be burdensome and costly to conduct a child audit or impact assessment on every single GLA policy or plan. Instead, we would like to see consideration given to the development of a programme of audits and assessments across the range of key GLA Group responsibilities and activities, over a the period of a mayoral term of office, along similar lines to best value review programmes. Any such audits must be carried out either by, or in close consultation with, children and young people themselves.

*Recommendation 10*

**We recommend that the GLA Children's Unit establish a selective programme of child audit and impact assessments of its policies and actions. This must be done either by, or in close consultation with, children and young people, and should cover the range of GLA family services and responsibilities.**

## **6 Advocacy**

- 6.1 Rachel Hodgkin suggested that a key priority for the GLA's Children and Young People's Unit should be to promote or fund a 'first-class confidential independent advocacy service for children'.<sup>29</sup> She referred to the example of the Independent Panel for Special Education Advice (IPSEA), which relies on voluntary professional support, and argued that advocacy services were needed in order to provide all London child advocates with legal advice and practical information.
- 6.2 This proposal relates to some of the comments that were made to us during our visits to Network East Foyer centres. Young people we met there, and those who worked with them, told us that they had experienced great difficulties in gaining clear and comprehensible information about their benefit and housing rights and entitlements, and that as a result they had been homeless and without any income, sometimes for several weeks. An advocacy and information unit could go some way to addressing this problem across London, by producing accessible materials.
- 6.3 The draft Strategy reports consultation work that found that only 38 per cent of London's children are aware that they have rights. A pan-London advocacy support service could also take the lead in raising awareness about children's rights, among both children and adults. In addition to providing direct advice to advocates, the unit could produce child-friendly literature for circulation to schools and youth centres.
- 6.4 There is mention at points in the draft Strategy of the need for advocacy services. However, as Rachel Hodgkin pointed out, there should be more emphasis on this, and a concrete proposal to address that need. We would expect the GLA to be a partner in such an exercise, along with the ALG and central Government, which are responsible for the delivery of direct child services.
- 6.5 Local authorities are also responsible for community legal services partnerships, which might be a useful vehicle for providing legal advice and advocacy for children and young people. The first example of this can be found in the 'Streetwise' service in Bromley, a pilot scheme involving the Law Centres Federation, Youth Action UK, Connexions, and other stakeholders. Bearing in mind the role of local authorities, we would want to see evidence of joint commitment to and funding for the scheme. However, we believe there is a potential role for regional government to take the lead in assuring access to high quality advice and advocacy on the law, rights, and children's and young people's services in London, in view of the disproportionately large numbers of children in London who live in poverty.

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<sup>29</sup> Written evidence from Rachel Hodgkin, p. 1

*Recommendation 11*

**We recommend that the Mayor consider what role the GLA should play, alongside the ALG, local authorities and other bodies, in setting up and supporting a pan-London child advocacy and advice unit. We would like to see positive commitments to action on this front in the final strategy.**

## **7 The local environment**

- 7.1 The Sort it Out! Revisited report showed that the most commonly mentioned things that children and young people find ‘awful’ about London relate to the local environment - graffiti, dog fouling, fly-posting, vandalism. Whilst the draft Strategy discusses personal safety and safe places to play, there is perhaps surprisingly little attention given to these aspects of the local environment. This may be because the Mayor’s environmental strategies go some way to covering them.
- 7.2 Nonetheless, we are constantly reminded how important it is to demonstrate that consultations with children and young people have resulted in tangible outcomes, for example by the young people we met at Network East Foyer centres. We therefore suggest that the final version of the Strategy should contain a section specifically addressing these issues, and summarising the action that is to be taken. The Assembly’s Environment Committee has recently agreed to conduct an investigation into ‘Protecting the City Environment’ that will be examining these issues in detail, and we expect that Committee will have further points to make on these matters.<sup>30</sup>

## 8 Children's play strategy

- 8.1 The ALG highlighted four particular areas that it considers should be the highest priorities:
- a. the focus on child poverty in London;
  - b. lobbying for more resources for London;
  - c. improving accessibility and affordability of transport for young Londoners; and
  - d. working with London Play (funded by the ALG) to develop a children's play strategy for London.
- 8.2 We would support the priorities put forward by the ALG. With reference to the proposal to develop a Children's Play Strategy, we note the concerns raised by the National Youth Agency in its written evidence. Tom Wylie from the National Youth Agency drew our attention to the different needs of children compared to young people. He pointed out that most of the images in the draft Strategy are of children, and was concerned to make sure that the specific problems faced by adolescents are reflected.
- 8.3 This reflects our discussions with young homeless people at foyer centres in east London, whose needs are clearly different from those of younger homeless children. This is important in relation to the Children and Young People's Strategy. It will also be important in developing the children's play strategy to be clear about the age group that is being considered. We would encourage the Mayor to include in this strategy consideration of the need for attractive, safe and good quality recreation facilities for young people, such as sports facilities and safe and attractive places to meet. It might be useful to re-brand the play strategy as a 'recreation' strategy if it is to cover teenagers as well as younger children.

### *Recommendation 12*

**We recommend that the proposed children's play strategy for London address issues relating to young people as well as children, in terms of its content and its presentation.**

## 9 Implementing the Strategy: relationship between the GLA, national government and local authorities

- 9.1 Whilst the draft Strategy is comprehensive in its coverage of the issues, the Mayor's formal remit extends only to some of the relevant policy areas. The development of policy and delivery of services for children and young people is largely a national or local, rather than regional, responsibility.
- 9.2 It is possible that the Government's Green Paper on children at risk, and its children and young people's strategy, will propose far-reaching changes in the mechanisms of delivery of children's services.<sup>31</sup> The delay in the publication of the Green Paper (until autumn 2003), and the Government's final children and young people's strategy, makes it difficult to assess how the Mayor's draft Strategy will fit in with central government and local government frameworks and policies. The Children and Young People's Unit in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister wrote, 'you will be able to judge better how to achieve a good fit with national Government priorities when the Green Paper is published after the summer break'.<sup>32</sup>
- 9.3 The DfES London Challenge document is due for publication shortly. This considers education provision in the Capital. The draft Strategy also acknowledges that its development comes at a time of 'radical reform within the NHS'.
- 9.4 When we raised our concerns about the timing of the Mayor's draft Strategy in relation to national government policy development, Caroline Boswell assured us, 'the contact we've had with people from the Children and Young People's Unit ... and people who have been involved in the consultation process, the advisory board members of the Unit, have very much welcomed the Mayor's Strategy and have seen it as essentially complementary to and following a similar approach in terms of outcomes and entitlements for children as the national strategy ... I don't think there is any conflict there'.<sup>33</sup> Caroline Boswell also told us that the Green Paper's publication in the Autumn would allow sufficient time for the Mayor's strategy (due to be launched in December) to take it into account.
- 9.5 Nonetheless, the changes taking place at a national level make it important that there be a clear mechanism and timetable for reviewing the contents of the strategy once it is finalised, in order to ensure it remains relevant and workable in the context of national policies and actions.

### *Recommendation 13*

**We recommend that the final strategy include a timetable for review and revision, making clear how stakeholders can contribute to the process.**

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<sup>31</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Written evidence from CYPUP

<sup>33</sup> Minutes of Committee Meeting, 10 July 2003, p. 4



- 9.6 A 'working model', showing some of the structures and processes that might be put in place to implement the Strategy, given to us by the NSPCC, Children's Society, London Play and Save the Children Fund (UK), shows the range and complexity of the relationships between the various agencies that are involved in delivering services that affect children and young people. The task of coordinating these bodies around a shared vision and objectives, let alone an action plan, is a daunting one, and the draft Strategy, perhaps inevitably, is somewhat confused on this issue.
- 9.7 In the light of this complex organisational structure, the scope of the draft Strategy needs to be made clearer. At the moment, it is a mixture of comprehensive discussion of the relevant issues, with proposed policies that are of course skewed in the direction of services over which the Mayor has some power or direct influence.
- 9.8 The draft Strategy is clear in acknowledging that the Mayor cannot himself deliver his vision for a child-friendly city. For example, in the section of the draft Strategy entitled 'Making it Happen', it states that, 'Many of the key areas of service delivery for children ... are clearly outside the remit of the Mayor ...'.<sup>34</sup> It goes on to point out that "the GLA does have a lead role in other areas of strategic importance for London's children, including transport, policing, the fire service, planning and the environment. Action in these areas, together with action on child poverty, inequality and participation, should help to improve the quality of life for London's children".<sup>35</sup>
- 9.9 It is not immediately clear from the draft Strategy whether the aim is to show how the Mayor intends to take action within his own powers and remit (through Transport for London, the Metropolitan Police Authority, the London Development Agency, London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority and the GLA), or ultimately to produce one document that contains commitments to specific actions by the range of agencies, to cover the full gamut of issues that are discussed.
- 9.10 Caroline Boswell said, 'where clearly regional government has particular responsibilities in relation to transport, economic regeneration and spatial planning, it is able actually to make certain commitments and develop certain actions to be taken forward at the regional level'.<sup>36</sup> However, the draft Strategy also contains a raft of proposals that can only be implemented at borough or national government level, such as those relating to education, housing and health. The ALG criticised the strategy's lack of detail on such issues.<sup>37</sup> It is not clear from the draft Strategy whether we should expect the final strategy to include agreement or commitment to these proposals by the relevant bodies.

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<sup>34</sup> draft Strategy, p. 100

<sup>35</sup> draft Strategy, p. 100

<sup>36</sup> Minutes of Committee Meeting, 10 July 2003, p. 4

<sup>37</sup> Written evidence from the ALG

*Recommendation 14*

**We recommend that if the final strategy is to be a *GLA* strategy, it should say so clearly. If it is in fact a pan-London cross-organisational strategy, it ought to be more detailed on issues and proposals outside the Mayor's direct remit, for example those relating to child services. This should include clear indications about how far the relevant bodies are committed to the strategy's analysis and proposals and the actions they will take to implement them. In any event the proposals for action by bodies other than the GLA should be identified clearly as such.**

## 10 Integration with other Mayoral strategies

- 10.1 The extent to which the aims of the strategy can be achieved will depend crucially on how far they are integrated into the Mayor's statutory strategies. The London Plan is due for completion by the end of this calendar year, and the Transport and Economic Development strategies are due to be revised at the same time. A number of the Mayor's environmental strategies have yet to be finalised.
- 10.2 Adrian Vokes, Director of London Play, told us he was concerned that the objectives of the draft Strategy should be fully reflected in other Mayoral strategies. He said, 'a key issue for us is, I think, ensuring that the strategy cross-cuts with other mayoral strategies. I think that is really essential if it is to have the impact it could have because so many of the areas that are covered by specific mayoral strategies - the London Plan, the Culture Strategy, the Childcare Strategy and so on - are likely to have more impact on the work of local authorities and how they develop their own strategies and plans'.<sup>38</sup>
- 10.3 Jason Lever, from the NSPCC, also pointed out the importance of ensuring that the strategy is integrated into other Mayoral strategies, in order to prevent the children and young people's strategy becoming 'just another document'.
- 10.4 We were heartened to hear from Caroline Boswell and Adrian Vokes that much work has already been done to take forward the children's strategy objectives with the functional bodies and within the GLA. Adrian Vokes told us about London Play's participation in the London Plan Examination in Public, and referred to the Mayor's Open Space Strategy, which he said already reflected some of the issues discussed in the draft Children and Young People's strategy.

### *Recommendation 15*

**We recommend that it be made clear in the final London Plan and the revised Transport and Economic Development Strategies where elements of the Children and Young People's Strategy have been reflected.**

<sup>38</sup> Minutes of Committee Meeting, 10 July 2003, p. 2

## **11 Conclusion: Political commitment**

- 11.1 Ultimately, the success of the Mayor's Children and Young People's Strategy will depend on the extent of political will to implement it when faced with all the other competing priorities of the Mayor and the relevant bodies. The UN conceptual framework points out that, 'the children's rights strategy needs commitment at the highest political level in the city and across city government. Without this, it is most unlikely that it will have sufficient authority to really change things for children. There is a danger of a strategy being largely cosmetic and remaining marginalized outside key decision-making processes'.<sup>39</sup>
- 11.2 The Mayor has already shown political commitment to the draft Strategy, by taking the innovative decision to produce it in the first place. There have also been resources allocated (albeit the same amount as was spent by the GLA on the Mayor's Culture Strategy launch event, which was £100,000) within the Mayor's budget for this year, and a commitment to establish a Children and Young People's Unit.
- 11.3 The former Deputy Mayor, Nicky Gavron AM, should be congratulated for her work in bringing the strategy to this point. The next crucial step will be for the Mayor to give substance to this, by committing himself to a programme of action to deliver the strategy. We trust the implementation of our recommendations will assist him in developing that programme.

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<sup>39</sup> UN conceptual framework, p. 8

## **Annex A: Summary of Recommendations**

1. We recommend that the final strategy contain clear guidance on the meaning and status of the various terms used to describe its proposals and commitments (including 'objectives', 'policies', 'proposals', actions and unclassified commitments). As far as possible, statements of intention or policy should be supported by commitments to practical actions.
2. We further recommend that the final strategy should contain a summary of proposals, as was included in the Mayor's Culture Strategy, showing what action is to be taken and when, and who is to lead on it.
3. We recommend that the final strategy make clear the order of priority of the proposals, and include a three-year action plan for their implementation. This should include clear milestones and 'deliverables; against which progress can be measured over time. This should make clear the expected outcomes of the various actions that are proposed, and provide a robust basis for holding the Mayor to account against his plans and commitments.
4. We welcome the allocation of GLA funds to the production of a State of London's Children Report. The GLA is well-placed to play an information-gathering role at a London-wide level. We recommend that this research be carried out as a priority once the new Children and Young People's Unit is set up.
5. We recommend the Mayor produce child-friendly summaries of all his statutory strategies, in the same way as alternative language formats and large-print versions are made available to other equalities target groups. These should be produced in consultation with schools, to ensure that advantage is taken of opportunities to make the documents useable as part of the citizenship or IT curriculums.
6. We further recommend that the volume and nature of responses to these documents be monitored to establish whether there are target groups among children and young people that may need to be more actively consulted.
7. We recommend that the Mayor give consideration to the proposal that future editions of The Londoner include a child-friendly supplement containing key information about relevant policies, events, participation opportunities and outcomes from previous consultations. The effectiveness of this method of disseminating information among young Londoners should be monitored over time to ensure it is reaching the intended audience.
8. We recommend that the GLA commission an audit of current opportunities for children and young people to participate in decision-making and policy formulation.
9. We recommend that the GLA take the lead in the production of a children's budget for London, analysing the proportion and nature of expenditure that is

in line with the objectives of the Children and Young People's Strategy. This should be done once during each Mayoral term.

10. We recommend that the GLA Children's Unit establish a selective programme of child audit and impact assessments of its policies and actions. This must be done either by, or in close consultation with, children and young people, and should cover the range of GLA family services and responsibilities.
11. We recommend that the Mayor consider what role the GLA should play, alongside the ALC, local authorities and other bodies, in setting up and supporting a pan-London child advocacy and advice unit. We would like to see positive commitments to action on this front in the final strategy.
12. We recommend that the proposed children's play strategy for London address issues relating to young people as well as children, in terms of its content and its presentation.
13. We recommend that the final strategy include a timetable for review and revision, making clear how stakeholders can contribute to the process.
14. We recommend that if the final strategy is to be a GLA strategy, it should say so clearly. If it is in fact a pan-London cross-organisational strategy, it ought to be more detailed on issues and proposals outside the Mayor's direct remit, for example those relating to child services. This should include clear indications about how far the relevant bodies are committed to the strategy's analysis and proposals and the actions they will take to implement them. In any event the proposals for action by bodies other than the GLA should be identified clearly as such.
15. We recommend that it be made clear in the final London Plan and the revised Transport and Economic Development Strategies where elements of the Children and Young People's Strategy have been reflected.

## **Annex B: List of Witnesses**

The following organisations and individuals provided written evidence to our scrutiny:

National Youth Agency  
School Councils UK  
Ray Bellas, Youth and Community Worker  
Association of London Government  
Mrs B Glatt, Director of Studies (Year 9), Edgware School  
Children and Young People's Unit  
NSPCC  
Save the Children Fund  
London Play  
The Children's Society  
Jeremy Rosenblatt, Chair of the Bar Committee on the Rights of the Child  
Rachel Hodgkin

The Committee visited two foyer organisations run by Network East Foyers on 25 June 2003, and met young residents and those who worked with them. The names of the young people we met are not printed here, for the purposes of confidentiality. However, we are grateful to them for their time and for their frankness and openness in sharing their views.

The following attended the Committee's evidentiary hearing on 10 July 2003:

Caroline Boswell, GLA  
Jason Lever, NSPCC  
Adrian Voces, London Play  
Sue Emerson, Save the Children Fund (UK)  
Gavin Mackenzie, Children's Society

## Annex C: Orders and Translations

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## **Annex D: Principles of Assembly Scrutiny**

The powers of the London Assembly include the power to investigate and report on the 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.

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