

Stockwell Community Leaders Report



Funded by the Metropolitan Migration Foundation
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Introduction

The Community Leaders project aimed to train migrant residents as 'community leaders', with the skills and confidence to affect change in their communities and the ability to work with people from different backgrounds. The project was run by Stockwell Partnership and City Lit College, February - March 2014 and is based on the 'Active Citizenship' course delivered by the College. The project was funded by Metropolitan Migration Fund, with additional funding from Lambeth Forum Network and Lambeth Adult Learning Service.

Over six weekly sessions, twelve residents came together to discuss what they love about where they live and to identify issues that affect them. Participants split into groups and walked around their neighbourhood, taking photos to capture what they like about the local area, and the things they want to change.

The positives identified by the group included good transport links, the green spaces and the cultural diversity. Some of the group felt that Stockwell is often stereotyped as a dangerous place, which undermines people's sense of pride and belonging to their local area.

However, the group did identify some things about where they live that they would like to change, to make life in Stockwell easier and safer. Safety was a commonly identified theme, especially since the participants were mostly mothers with young children.

Through the course, participants gained an understanding of active citizenship and the process of decision making on a local, national and international level. They prepared a presentation about the issues they identified and what they would like to see happen, which they gave at Stockwell Forum. This report uses the photographs taken by the group to highlight the issues participants raised in the presentation and what they would like to see happen.

1. Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour

Crime was the main issue we talked about during the course. There have been a number of incidents around Stockwell tube station which made us feel threatened and insecure about the area. We felt that crime is linked to lots of other issues.

Not enough activities for young people

A few parents had experienced verbal abuse from young people, particularly when they took their children to the playground. We feel that because young people don't have enough places to go or things to do, they end up hanging out in playgrounds. It upset parents to hear young people swearing in front of their children but most parents did not feel comfortable talking to the young people and so would have to take their children somewhere else.

We agreed there were a lot of negative stereotypes about teenagers and not enough opportunities for them or alternatives to crime and gangs. We talked about the need for more places where young people could spend time with friends as youth centres might not be attractive to all young people. We felt that the cuts to youth services will make this problem worse.



A playground in Stockwell Gardens where teenagers often hang around

Recommendations:

- More places on estates for young people to go
- More detached youth workers, particularly on estates to talk to young people who are not going to youth centres
- More police presence on estates and more CCTV

A lack of employment opportunities

We thought a lack of employment opportunities for young people causes crime. We want to see more apprenticeships, training and employment opportunities available to prevent people from engaging in crime. Being part of a gang gives young people a sense of belonging.

We talked about the difficulties of escaping crime once someone has a criminal record. With a record it is harder to get a job and this will encourage them to offend again.



Flowers for Femi Junaid, stabbed outside Stockwell station

Recommendations

- Young people need more opportunities for apprenticeships and training
- There needs to be more effective help for people with a criminal record to get jobs

Relationships between the police and the community

Some participants who had been affected by crime said that the response from the police was too late. One participant said she waited four hours after reporting a crime for the police to arrive.

If people do not trust the police, they will not feel they can talk to them. Police need to be friendlier and talk to the community, to make people feel safer. We thought people would feel safer if the police were more visible and approachable.

Recommendations

- Police need to be more visible in public spaces, e.g. parks
- Police need to be more approachable so people feel they can talk to them. They need to listen to the community
- Police need to respond more quickly to crimes when they are reported

2. Children and families

Our group are mostly parents of young children. We want to see more places where parents can take their children and more activities. Some of us did not feel listened to when we reported problems, e.g. broken facilities in playgrounds.

Not enough activities for different age groups

We talked about the need for more activities for people of different age groups. A couple of parents in the group said they wanted to have somewhere indoors where families could go with their children.

On our walk around the local area, we saw a few community venues which were not well looked after. We spoke to one staff member in a building owned by the council, who said their building needed lots of repairs. They talked about how they struggle with funding. In the group we discussed how a lack of funding for community groups meant that there were not enough activities on offer.



Families need places to go but existing community buildings are not being looked after

Recommendations

- More activities for people of different ages
- We want indoor places where families can go with their children

Buggy issue

One member of the group explained that she has an ongoing problem with storing her buggy. She lives on Studley Estate. Her flat is on the third floor and the property doesn't have a lift. She has a one year old and a two year old and used to have a double buggy. Carrying the buggy up and down the stairs is very difficult for her.

She said there is no space to store buggies and bikes in her block. When she left her buggy downstairs to carry her children to the flat, the buggy was taken by the Housing Association. She had to pay to get her buggy back. Apart from inconvenience, carrying the buggy upstairs has given her back problems and she had a letter from the doctor about this. Along with another resident, she has been trying to solve this problem for 3 years. They offered to pay for a garage space. They also found a place where a buggy store could be erected. 20 parents signed a petition they created, which was given to the Tenants and

Residents Association. The participant has attended 8 TRA meetings but the issue still hasn't been solved.

Although a space has been found to put up a buggy store, the Housing Association has said they do not have enough funding. A woman from the TRA was invited to one of the Community Leaders' meetings. She has offered to help. We also presented the issue on at Stockwell Forum.



The space which has been suggested by the residents for the buggy store

Recommendations

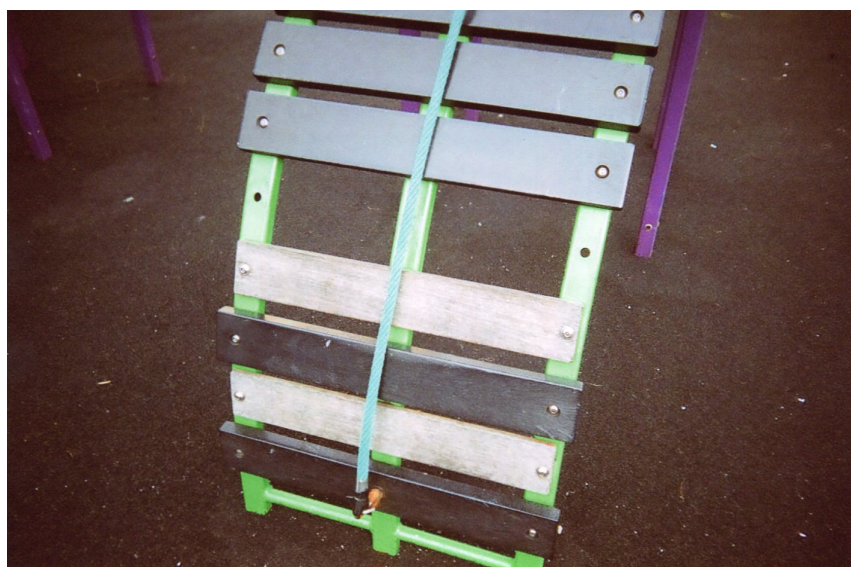
- Funding needs to be provided to put a buggy store in place

Maintenance of the play areas

We took photos which showed playgrounds that are not being maintained, which means they are not safe for children to play in. Some of the facilities have been damaged which makes it dangerous for children to use them, for example in the play area opposite Dover Court.

Recommendations

- Maintenance of playgrounds to keep children safe



Broken play equipment opposite Dover Court

3. SAFETY AND MAINTENANCE

Finally, walking around the local area, we noticed lots of litter. We also took photos of the roads and crossings, which we feel are unsafe, particularly when there are so many schools around.

No safe crossing on Jeffreys Road

One group member took this photo because it is near where she lives on Jeffreys Road and she said there needs to be a crossing. The area is between two schools (Lark Hall and Allen Edwards Primary Schools), so there are a lot of children and families crossing this road everyday. She said the road is dangerous because drivers go too fast. Even though there are speed humps, drivers speed between them. We wanted to see signs with the speed limit. There used to be a lollipop lady on the street to help the children cross.



No crossing on Jeffreys Road

Recommendations

- Bring back the lollipop lady
- Get a zebra crossing
- Have a speed limit sign to encourage drivers to go slow

Traffic lights on Clapham Road outside Iceland

We identified that the crossing on Clapham Road opposite Hyde Housing is dangerous. We timed the green light for pedestrians, which only lasted for 9 seconds which made crossing risky and difficult.

Recommendations

- Increase the time on the green light to 30 seconds



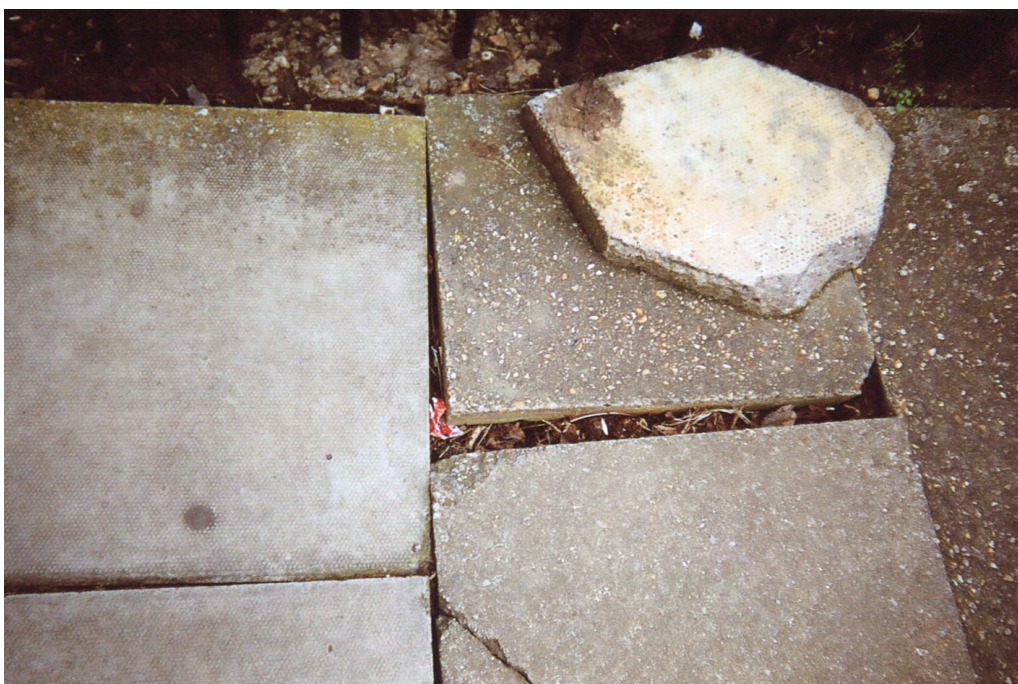
The crossings outside Stockwell station are dangerous

Broken pavement

As you can see in the photo below, the pavement at Paradise Road is broken and causing problems to the residents. It's difficult to push buggies there and children are at risk of tripping up and hurting themselves (e.g. the daughter of one of the group fell and broke her finger).

Recommendations

- Fix broken pavements to prevent accidents



Paradise Road broken pavement

Litter and dog mess on the streets

When we walked around the neighbourhood, we saw lots of litter on the streets. This problem also affects the play areas. Dog owners often do not pick up dog mess on the streets (e.g. at Leverhurst Way), which makes the streets dirty and unpleasant. Parents in the group said they worried their children would pick up the rubbish.



Litter outside Stockwell station

Recommendations

- More bins on the streets
- More dog mess bins
- Notices reminding people to clear up after themselves – an educational campaign

Next Steps

Over the six week course, participants have identified what they love about their area and what they would like to see change. They have learnt about the causes and effects of issues in the community and also learnt about how local decision making works. Through presenting issues at Stockwell Forum and contributing to this report, the group have had the opportunity to have their voices heard.

The group are planning to meet with the council to discuss taking their recommendations forward.

Acknowledgements

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