Understanding Young People's Experiences of Violence in Lambeth

– a Participatory Action Research Approach

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PAC

About this report

This report shares the findings from our research into the impact of violence on young people. The study used peer action research methods to explore the relationship between the environment young people grow up in and levels of violence affecting young people in Lambeth.

Research was conducted by the Lambeth Peer Action Collective between December 2021 – August 2022. Following the research, the peer research team spent time with their peers to carefully reflect on the insights gathered and created an organised list of specific demands for better opportunities, housing and an education system that works for all young people. This report reflects the experiences of young people in Lambeth and presents a collective manifesto to address the challenges raised.

Research Group

The Lambeth Peer Action Collective (LPAC) is led by High Trees Community Development Trust and supported by a partnership of seven youth organisations based in Lambeth — Juvenis, Spiral Skills, IRMO, MLCE, St Matthews Project, Grove Adventure Playground and The Baytree Centre. Together these organisations bring over 100 years collective experience of working with young people in Lambeth.

Peer researchers (listed alphabetically by first name)

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Executive Summary

Violence affecting young people is a long-standing issue in Lambeth. Experiences of violence can be life-altering events for young people as well as their families and the wider community. All too often, however, the young people most impacted by it are not heard.

Since August 2021, the Lambeth Peer Action Collective has been working alongside a group of peer researchers to research the perspectives of young people living in Lambeth and how the environment they live in shapes their experiences of violence. Overall, 418 young people have contributed their thoughts through a series of one-to-one interviews, arts-based workshops and 'Talk it Out' sessions.

The stories captured through this project paint a vivid picture of the experiences of young people in Lambeth and their perspectives on the causes and consequences of the violence they encounter. Our research findings expose the distressing impact that violence has on young people, as well as their friends, family and wider community. For many of the young people we spoke to, violence is seen as a normal, routine and inevitable part of their lives. Often exposed to violence daily, we saw young people carry the mental and emotion burden of trying to keep safe and avoid potential harm. Life-altering, tragic events left them vulnerable and hopeless.

Our conversations with young people also brought to the fore the invisible and visible social, economic and racial inequalities that create the conditions that lead to violence. They often described how the weight of these inequalities falls unequally on Black children and young people in our community.

Unsurprisingly factors like poverty, poor housing, exclusionary and disciplinary education, the uneven benefits of regeneration, unsafe public spaces and limited access to high quality support, leave many young people feeling abandoned and without agency in their lives.

Key Findings

1. For many young people, violence is seen as an inevitable, routine and normal part of their lives.

2. Safe, affordable and youth-friendly neighbourhoods are important places for young people to find connection, opportunities and belonging.

3. Poor housing conditions make young people feel unsafe.

4. Many young people feel that they cannot rely on public services and are cut off from important opportunities.

5. There is a mental and emotional burden young people carry to keep safe and avoid potential harm.

6. Many young people feel they don't have control over their lives and futures.

Call for Action

Despite these challenges, young people are organising for the safety they deserve. Using the insights from the research, the peer research team have spent time with their peers to carefully reflect and create an organised list of specific demands for better opportunities, housing and an education system that works for all young people. The LPAC team are now campaigning to make their hopeful manifesto a reality and have involved over 200 young people in their organising efforts to date.

A Manifesto for Change

Our manifesto for change presents twelve opportunities for local funders, statutory service providers and policymakers to help build a safer, protective, and more caring ecosystem for young people in Lambeth to grow up in and a future for young people free from violence. We hope the gathered learning in this report makes the case for a different kind of approach to tackling the root causes of violence affecting young people locally.

Housing

When your estate is under-invested, damp and crowded, how are you supposed to feel about your place in society? Unsafe housing, rising rents and living costs and a lack of good quality youth provision create conditions for people to find supplementary income 'on the road', or simply lower their ambitions. Whether you're a social or private tenant or a homeowner, housing policy must prioritise resident wellbeing.

We ask for:

5. Safe and decent homes for all.
6. Properly funded youth provision.
7. No more regeneration without our input.
8. Support with the cost of living.

Opportunities

Without a leg up, intergenerational poverty will continue to pull down the chances of young people in Lambeth. While we've seen the area change and certain businesses thrive, many of the benefits of regeneration are not being felt by families who have lived here all their lives. It forces young people to ask: who is this regeneration for? We ask: how can we ensure young people benefit from regeneration?

We ask for:

1. No more regeneration without opportunities for us.
2. Jobs with local businesses.
3. Consistent & accessible guidance & support.
4. Educate young people on how to make and keep money.

Education

When a young person's first contact with school is shaped by a lack of understanding and even rejection, it can lead them down the path of someone who has learned that they are disposable, or at least incompatible with mainstream education. What might an education system look like if it were to support young people more proactively, before it gets harder to change the path they're heading down?

We ask for:

9. An emphasis on support, not just discipline.
10. School staff who treat us as individuals and understand our lives.
11. An education system that works for us.
12. Commitment to anti-racism & anti-discrimination.

For more information on our manifesto and how you can get involved see www.lambethpac.com

Contents

Background

Lambeth remains one of the most dangerous places in London to be young. Over the last five years, violence affecting young people has increased and now above pre-pandemic levels[1]. According to the Metropolitan Police's Crime Dashboard, between January 2022 and January 2023, the rate of knife crime rose by 22.1% and is the second highest figure for any London Borough[2].

Violence has wide ranging impacts on young people's lives, and can also have devastating effects on family, friends and the wider community[3]. Adverse effects on the health and wellbeing of young people can include:

- Physical injuries that are both fatal and non-fatal, some causing long-term disability
- Health risk behaviours such as smoking, alcohol and substance misuse
- Mental ill-health such as anxiety or depression
- Educational under-achievement and unemployment
- Reduced quality of life, for example preventing people from using outdoor space and public transport

Early on, our team identified that the environment young people grow up in is an important contributor to the violence they experience. Existing evidence shows that violence disproportionately affects those who are already marginalised and disadvantaged[4]. There is a link between area-level poverty and violence in London, particularly in areas that have a higher proportion of people[5]. Recent analysis shows that violence affecting young people is highest in boroughs like Lambeth with multiple deprivation, including high long-term unemployment, low educational attainment, and higher estimates of rough sleepers[6]. Although income deprivation is the greatest predictor of high levels of violence in a specific neighbourhood, these neighbourhoods also face greater barriers to housing and services, poorer quality living environments, and greater health problems[7]. There is also growing evidence that the 2008 recession and reductions in public spending may have increased the vulnerability of some neighbourhoods and cohorts to violence[8].

Many protective and risk factors that predict future violence highlight how this can, in fact, be prevented. Those involved in violence are likely to be vulnerable in multiple ways and many may have experienced past victimisation and trauma. Adverse childhood experiences, exposure to physical and domestic abuse, school exclusions, and being a looked-after child are strong predictors of future involvement[9].

These risk factors can be cumulative and interact in different ways to impact vulnerability to violence. But protective factors can reduce the likelihood of the involvement of young people in violence at individual and neighbourhood levels. Some evidence highlights how social cohesion and trust are likely to protect areas from violence[10]. Factors like high educational achievement, involvement in pro-social activities, interaction and support can reduce the likelihood of young people's exposure to violence in their area[11].

It is essential that young people have a more meaningful role in the conversation around the violence that affects them and are invited to take a lead on identifying the solutions they feel would make the most difference to their lives. The Lambeth Peer Action Collective was developed to give young people the opportunity to lead research into young people's experiences of violence in Lambeth and to facilitate a discussion with their peers around the practical action they feel needs to be taken.

Part One: Research

Methodology

The Lambeth Peer Action Collective (LPAC) launched in August 2021 with the recruitment of 12 peer researchers.

This group of young people led an intensive research programme over a period of eight months, designing and carrying out 106 interviews with their peers and facilitating workshops with a further 231 young people.

What is peer research?

Peer research is a participatory research approach in which people with direct experience of the issues being investigated take part in directing or conducting the research. This approach aims to move away from more traditional forms of social research where professional researchers produce knowledge 'about' a particular community, which can leave communities feeling excluded and exploited. By moving towards a model where research is conducted by and for those with personal experience, peer research offers an alternative method of research, aiming to be more ethical, inclusive, democratic, and relevant for communities[12].

In bringing their own experience into the research process, peer research can also help to develop deeper insights, enhancing the richness and nuance through their inside understanding of issues[13]. As peer researchers are drawn from the communities being researched, they can help to recruit people who might otherwise be unwilling to engage with external researchers and who often go unheard.

This is especially important when exploring sensitive topics like violence or when working with marginalised communities as participants may be able to respond more openly and honestly with someone familiar to them. Through giving communities the chance to speak for themselves, peer research can support connection, trust and empowerment to promote social change even after the research is completed[14].

Whilst peer research may involve different levels of involvement, we opted for a fully participatory approach throughout the research process. Our team of peer researchers were responsible for research design, developing research methods and tools, collecting and analysing data, and disseminating findings.

Despite evidence of many benefits, there are challenges to setting up a peer research project as well as recruiting, training, and working alongside peer researchers[15]. To support the quality of data and enhance credibility, three embedded researchers were recruited to support the project team. The involvement of academic researchers helped peer researchers evaluate and improve the quality of data collected, offer rigorous training and guidance on all aspects of the research process, and support the credibility of data analysis and findings.

Recruitment of our peer researchers

Recruitment of the peer researchers took place across the LPAC partnership, coordinated centrally by High Trees. Each LPAC partner identified interested young people and supported them to take part in a centralised recruitment process which allowed us to understand the skills, interest and competencies of the young people. Once the peer researchers were recruited, they were then assigned back to their 'host' organisation — this ensured that although all the young people were new to this project, and the concept and practice of peer research, they had a prior relationship with the host organisation they would sit with for the duration of the research.

Who were our peer researchers?

- 12 peer researchers were recruited in total, between the ages of 17 and 21.
- Five were female and six were male (one peer researcher preferred not to disclose this information).
- All our peer researchers (of those who chose to disclose their ethnicity) came from a Minority Ethnic background. Eight were Black (Black African, Black Caribbean or any other Black, Black British, or Caribbean background), one was Mixed Ethnicity (White and Black Caribbean) and one was Asian. Two peer researchers preferred not to disclose this information.

Our peer researchers shared their motivations for getting involved with LPAC:

"I've seen many of my close friends and family members forced into a lifestyle they don't want essentially because of their postcode."
Aaliyah

"I love seeing young people take charge of this campaign. It shows we're serious, we know what we're doing, and we're here to be a voice for the unspoken."
Abi

"Often changes are made to young people or for young people, enforcing a lack of power. Centring young people tries to shift the power of what happens to them into their control."
Annais

"I'm a young person growing up in Brixton and Lambeth and it's not easy. Just being able to relate to what other young people have been through and seen, means that I can take my experience and their input and together we can change something."
Daryl

"With what I've been through growing up here, LPAC is personal. As I'm coming from a community without many positive role models, why not be one myself?"
Jhemar

"I've always been curious as to why certain things happen in the community and what I could do to have a positive impact. I'm hoping that through PAC I'll get the answers to my questions."
Emmanuel

"Growing up there wasn't many spaces for me and my friends to enjoy ourselves without there being some negative consequences. My skills as a team player have improved as I've been able to work with a group of smart and unique young people."
Legion

"No one should have to go through the violence I have seen and experienced. I feel like when I'm speaking to them, I can understand what they have been through better."
Shueib

Training peer researchers

As part of the onboarding and development process, the peer researchers undertook an intensive period of training over the first ten weeks of the project, meeting weekly as a group with project staff, whilst also attending group activity sessions at their host organisations to begin to develop relationships with other young people who would potentially become research participants. These weekly meetings allowed for their induction, training and development both as individuals and a collective.

Training and skill development focused on peer research itself, understanding its strengths and limitations compared to other research methods, and developing the skills needed to undertake this type of research, including listening and facilitation skills. Considerable work was undertaken to ensure the peer researchers were able to understand, lead and own the research throughout and the embedded researchers and the High Trees team trained the young people in the practice of data collection and analysis, understanding bias, how to critically analyse existing research and the ethics and practice of conducting research. The group also received training around the practice and principles of community organising, to help them develop their own understanding of power in the contexts in which it impacts them, and to embed community organising principles within their subsequent social action phase.

Defining youth violence

The first step for the peer researchers was to identify the research theme and the meaning of youth violence itself. This was a term introduced as part of the project funding as the broad area in which research would be undertaken. Using a series of facilitated discussions the peer researchers worked together using their own experiences to develop their own definition of youth violence.

This led them to develop the definition that 'youth violence is any form of harm (emotional/ physical) done to young people'. It was important to the group that the definition was broad enough to enable young people to interpret this in the context of their own experiences and to capture any forms of harm that young people experienced as part of their day to day lives. The group recognised that the personal experience of young people could identify forms of harm beyond those that are more frequently featured in headlines (for example knife crime).

Defining the research question

The peer researchers were supported to explore the current literature on violence affecting young people in Lambeth. This critical appraisal of the literature involved examining a selection of published research, media articles and government publications. Discussion focused on any gaps in the existing research, the extent to which research reflected the direct experience of the peer researchers and the quality of the research (including a consideration of any potential bias).

These facilitated discussions allowed the peer researchers to identify sub-themes that they considered aligned with their personal experiences of youth violence in Lambeth, with prominent themes emerging around the role of the physical environment surrounding young people, experiences of social housing, experiences of education and the influence of older peers. The peer researchers were supported to refine these themes into specific research questions, whilst also considering the need to limit the scope of their research to ensure it was feasible and considering how the research could facilitate social action.

The research objectives identified by the peer-researchers were two-fold:

- What is the role of living conditions, in and around social housing estates, in Lambeth, on levels of youth violence?
- If there was one thing you could change to reduce violence amongst young people, what would it be?

The following questions were identified to enable the research objectives to be met:

- What concerns do young people have about youth violence in their local area or when travelling around?
- How do young people feel about living in Lambeth, specifically in relation to their local area, estate, home and any youth provision?
- How are young people's need for safety and support being met in Lambeth?
- What impact does youth violence have on young people?
- What one thing could be done together to reduce youth violence?

Data collection

Phase one: one to one interviews

10 peer researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with young people on their experiences of youth associated violence. Semi-structured interviews offer an effective way of exploring participants' opinions and perceptions[16] and using open-ended questions, peer researchers were able to collect in-depth data whilst allowing participants to explore the topics that are important to them and in a way that they are most comfortable[17]. Key research questions and a discussion guide were developed by peer researchers and piloted with young people to ensure the questions were accessible and clear.

To take part in the research young people had to be between the ages of 10 and 25 living in or accessing services (attending school or youth provision) in Lambeth, and able to consent to take part in the interview if above 18 or gain the consent of their parents if under 18. Young people were recruited through the youth services of all LPAC partners. Peer researchers spent two months working at these organisations to build up trust with potential participants before commencing interviews.

Overall, 106 interview transcripts were generated. Interviews lasted between 10 to 45 minutes depending on the age of the participant and whether the interviewer asked additional follow-up questions. Interviews were recorded on the research mobile application Fatima, and interview transcripts were created in the application.

Profile of young people who took part in the research

- The young people who took part in the interviews were aged between 10 and 24 years. 34% of participants were under 16, 45% were aged 16-18 and 21% were aged 19-24.

- 33% were female and 65% were male. 2% of participants preferred not to disclose this information.

- 64% of interviewees were Black (Black African, Black Caribbean or any other Black, Black British or Caribbean background), 16% were of Mixed Ethnicity (White and Black African, White and Black Caribbean or any other Mixed or Multiple ethnic background). 6% were White, 4% were Asian and 6% reported being from another ethnic group. 5% of participants preferred not to disclose this information.

- 59% of the young people we spoke to lived in social housing (renting either from the council or with another social landlord).

Phase two: school workshops

Arts-based workshops were conducted in schools and facilitated by peer researchers with the support of High Trees staff and the embedded researchers. Overall, 231 young people took part in workshop sessions. The workshop topics focussed on the themes of housing and neighbourhood, key areas that peer researchers felt were not covered in enough depth in Phase One. Peer researchers were offered training in a range of creative methods, choosing creative map making as the most suitable approach to generate more nuanced data on these topics.

Participatory and visual methods like map making can help young people to document their experiences and feelings whilst also enabling them to explore meanings with their peers and adults[18]. Pupils were asked to complete two activities. The first activity involved annotating and co-creating an illustrated map of Brixton, thinking about spaces where they do and don't feel safe, where they spend time, where they avoid and what they would change to improve safety. The second activity focused on annotating and co-creating an illustration of a housing estate and neighbourhood thinking about what happens in their local spaces, how it makes them feel safe or unsafe and what could be done to increase feelings of safety.

Profile of young people who took part in the school workshops

- The young people who took part in the school workshops were aged between 11 and 18 years. 94% of participants were under 16 and 6% were aged 16-18.

- 42% were female and 58% were male.

- 52% of workshop participants were Black (Black African, Black Caribbean or any other Black, Black British or Caribbean background), 12% were of Mixed Ethnicity (White and Black African, White and Black Caribbean or any other Mixed or Multiple ethnic background). 20% were White, 4% were Asian and 6% reported being from another ethnic group. Data was not available for 5% of participants.

Data analysis

Using a participatory action research framework, we adopted an iterative approach to data analysis[19]. This helped the team to develop and build emerging insights and interpretations throughout the research process, as well as reflect on gaps and challenges in the data collection.

Analysis sessions focused on three key steps: presenting back individual analysis of data, group discussions about common topics or issues emerging across the data analysed and organising and summarising data into themes. This cycle was repeated until data saturation was reached, and no new themes emerged.

Individual analysis

In Phase One, peer researchers were asked to listen to interviews, and to code the interview transcripts text with predefined labels based on the interview protocol and decided on in the first analysis workshop. They were then given analysis forms where they selected quotes relevant to the key research questions, identified themes or topics, explained why they were relevant, and considered what would motivate participants to take social action. Peer researchers were also encouraged to pay attention to non-verbal communication such as pacing, pauses, pitch and tone of speech to develop interpretations and a more nuanced analyses of interviews.

For Phase Two, peer researchers were given the hard copies of the annotated maps and neighbourhood/estate images from the school workshops they facilitated. They were then asked to write a short description about the map and how this best captured the group's experience, and how this related to the main research questions. Peer researchers were also asked to draw on discussions that they facilitated in the workshops and reflective notes collected in team debriefs after the sessions as context and evidence.

Developing emerging themes and insights

After presenting individual analyses, peer researchers were asked collectively to identify three to five topics that repeatedly emerged across the data. At each stage, issues or topics that surfaced in only a few interviews or maps were not incorporated into emerging themes unless sufficient evidence materialised during further data collection.

In small groups, the peer researchers were then tasked to write a description of the theme and sub-themes, noting any significant differences between participants' responses to the issue (for example by age, sex or race and ethnicity), and provide examples or quotes from the data to illustrate the theme and sub-themes.

These themes were then written up and presented back to the team by embedded researchers after every session. This approach was repeated in each analysis discussion until all data collected was fully analysed and data saturation was reached.

In the final analysis session, peer researchers reflected on the selected themes and explored how these could be organised to develop the cross-cutting insights generated in this report.

Ethics

Ethical approval was obtained from the Young Foundation, via an ethics form completed by peer researchers, High Trees management and embedded researchers.

There was a risk that this research could provoke distressing memories or experiences and trigger re-traumatisation in peer researchers and research participants. To manage these risks, peer researchers undertook trauma-informed training and safeguarding training ahead of interviews and had access to a trauma informed practitioner. They also took part in weekly reflective practice sessions with the other peer researchers and had access to a member of staff to debrief with.

At the end of interviews research participants were reminded that the information they had provided was confidential (unless it raised a safeguarding issue), that they had the choice to withdraw from the research and how to do so and were also asked for feedback on the interview.

In schools, young people whose parents had consented to their participation were briefed about the workshop and research in a school assembly ahead of the session. They were reminded that they could change their mind about taking part at any point up to and during the session. As the data collected in the session were group contributions and without personal identifiers such as names, they were notified that it would not be possible to remove it after the session.

Findings

Over the course of our research, we heard lots of stories from young people about the violence they navigate daily and the toll it takes on them. Young people spoke to us about the different ways their basic needs around safety are often unmet and are intensified by entrenched poverty, inequality, and discrimination. Whilst our findings are not intended to be representative of all young people living in Lambeth, they do provide a strong indication about how youth associated violence shapes their lives. The research findings are presented as six key insights that give us a deeper understanding of how local environments can feed or break cycles of violence.

In our analysis, we refer to 'many young people' or 'common' where themes or issues emerged repeatedly across the data collected, highlighting 'some young people' or a 'minority' where these issues impacted specific groups of young people more than others.

Insight 1: For many young people, violence is seen as an inevitable, routine, and normal part of their lives.

For many young people, violence is seen as an inevitable, routine, and normal part of their lives. They discussed how their journey to and through different spaces (home, school, social and play spaces) was important to their experiences of day-to-day violence. This included experiencing, witnessing or being aware of gang-related violence and knife crime, assaults, fights, and altercations (between adults as well as young people), gender-based violence, and harassment by adults in public or semi-public spaces. Strong networks of social support and family protection were important resources that helped some young people feel safe and protected against violence.

1.1 Navigating the inevitability of gang-related violence and knife crime

Many young people we heard from expressed a heightened awareness of violence, the risk of harm, and feeling unsafe in their local area. This was often influenced by first-hand experience, being a witness to or knowing someone who had been a victim of violence. These young people described the visibility and presence of gangs on their estates or streets as a form of authority that they try to avoid and are fearful of. Some young people living in social housing estates were cautious or hyper-vigilant when travelling around different estates or neighbourhoods.

" I lost my friend to it [violence]… it happens."

" It's a dangerous estate, a lot of shootings and stabbings there"

Staying away from gangs, however, did not protect young people from violence. Getting 'g-checked' (gang-checked) or being asked what area or estate they are from by other young people was a common experience for them. This question came with a threat of violence if they were perceived as coming from a different estate or potentially being affiliated with a gang.

" As in last year I got a knife pulled on me… I could've got stabbed"

" Someone asks 'where are you from?' and you say Brixton. And they ask 'what part'. You get shook now because you don't know what to say. You can say the wrong ends to just get punched up right there. You don't even have to be affiliated"

Often being aware of one event was enough to intensify their emotional or practical responses to every-day violence. Some avoided certain estates or areas entirely or identified safety exits when travelling to and from different places. At times, being aware of violent incidents caused grief and pain for everyone in the wider community as they were worried about the people close to them.

" It worries me that one day, like God forbid, that one day something bad will happen to my family members which is concerning. It's not good to like, always have that at the back of your head, 'oh are they okay are they okay' you just want to like, this is your neighbourhood you just want to be safe, happy, live your best life"

" It affects everyone as a family especially on a personal level and the individual level and on a social and community level"

1.2 Some young people feel more unsafe than others in public

Some young people feel more unsafe or at risk of violence than others. These disparities were often racialised, gendered, and shaped by age.

Young Black boys commonly felt that they were treated as a potential threat by other young people as well as adults in their local area. This was associated with increased vulnerability to youth violence as well as racial profiling by shopkeepers, the police and at school. Age, attending school or wearing school uniform did not protect them from being criminalised or perceived as a risk to safety.

Reports of youth violence and gangs in the media were seen to play an important role in sensationalising gang-related violence by some young people we spoke to. For these young people, such media coverage influenced racist stereotyping, disproportionately

locating the blame on Black communities without addressing the complex causes. This exacerbated feelings of frustration and powerlessness.

Travelling or being alone in public left young women feeling exposed and at risk of gender-based violence such as sexual harassment and catcalling. Some avoided travelling at night or via routes without street lighting as precautions. Others made sure they travelled or socialised in groups.

" I'm kinda nervous around Brixton area because I feel like someone's watching me from behind but when I look around, no one is there…"

## 1.3 Family protection and adult support helps young people feel safe

Adult support and protection in the wider community played an important role in how young people feel about their local area. Local family networks, friendliness by strangers and familiar faces enhance young people's sense of community and safety.

" If you know everyone, no one's gonna have a problem with you."

Those who expressed feeling safe often described being accompanied and supervised by adults and family members when they went out. Feeling protected helped them to relax and enjoy themselves in public. This was the case even when they spoke about the same areas that other young people identified as unsafe hot spots. Recent migrants, particularly from the Latin American community, were often unaware of violence locally. These young people similarly found safety in family supervision when socialising outside of their homes.

"My mum makes me feel safe… my family, yeah."

Some young people were grateful for their families or friends helping them to feel safe and comfortable in their home and local area. In turn, having families that helped young people to feel safe aided their physical and emotional health.
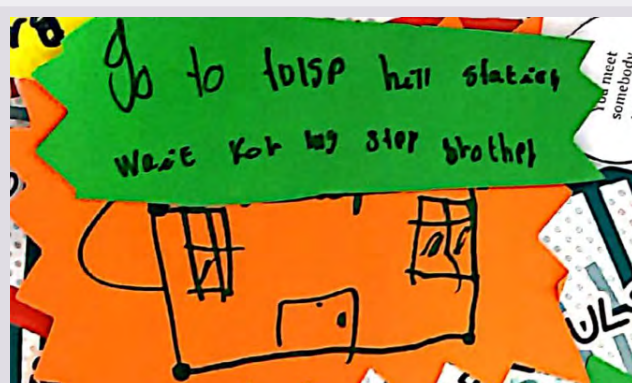
School Map 1:
Neighbourhood safety was linked to family presence. In this map, pupils have said that Tulse Hill station feels safe because they go there to 'wait for [their] stepbrother'.

Insight 2: Safe, affordable, and youth-friendly neighbourhoods are important places for young people to find connection, opportunities and belonging.

As young people transition to adulthood, they often look for spaces and relationships outside of school to find connection, belonging and community. They enjoyed accessing play and sport facilities like youth centres, parks, and football pitches local to their homes or schools. Many young people wanted more spaces to explore their interests, access opportunities and connect with others safely. Adults played an important role in community safety and protection. Young people who were connected to structured youth provision and strong networks of social support had much better access to safe spaces outside home or school. They also expressed feeling safer or protected against violence than other young people.

At the same time, many young people felt there was a lack of physical space where they lived to socialise in and have fun. This led some young people to describe their own neighbourhoods as boring, with nothing to do. Because of this, many young people spend most of their time in their local town centres near to their schools or via their school-home journeys. Young people expressed pride in these town centres like Brixton or Peckham, feeling strongly connected to their community, food, and cultural identity. Teenagers often spent time in affordable spaces like fast-food restaurants or shopping in retail stores. But these spaces often didn't have the resources to keep young people safe and were associated with youth violence and, at times, stigmatisation.

School Map 2:
Parks and sport were important and accessible places of safety for young people. In this map, pupils noted how the park provided a sense of quiet and calm.

2.1 Spending time in adult-centred spaces puts young people at increased risk of violence

Young people enjoy spending time in town centres like Brixton. For many young people we spoke to, they described how Brixton was a place for everyone (including homeless people and drug-addicts). Young Black people felt connected to the area's roots and identity as a centre for African, Caribbean, and other minority communities. Yet, some described the loss of affordable places and exclusion from new spaces because of gentrification and regeneration. This limited where they could hang-out and feel comfortable. A significant minority felt sad that these areas were also associated with youth violence and stigmatisation.

" I like that... It's a community that can get together to have fun."
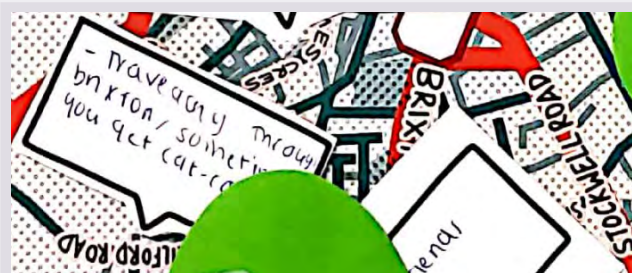

School Map 3:
Brixton's excitement was often linked to danger for young people. In this map, pupils have placed 'something fun happens here' next to a note for saying 'gunshot'. One of the pupils has used the term 'fun danger' for the town centre.

Young people regularly visited Brixton for shopping, to eat and hang-out in fast-food restaurants or access to free services like the library. Many craved the excitement and liveliness found in the bustling town centre in contrast to surrounding areas like West Norwood or Streatham. Brixton was seen as entertaining, chaotic, noisy, and unpredictable. However, this unpredictability could be stressful, leaving many young people feeling unsafe.

At times, adult men posed a threat to young women by perpetrating street-based sexual harassment. Many young people described challenging encounters with drug-users and addicts in public spaces. Although they expressed concern and empathised with their circumstances, at times they feared the unpredictability of their behaviour and potential for harassment.

" Now I live more in the centre, well there are many homeless people and there are many things that I don't like to see, you know? There are people that take drugs and that, and the truth is that I liked it better where I lived before."

" I might avoid certain people… those people who have mental illness and they can't really help it. However sometimes it's best to avoid people because that can sometimes anger them sometimes it might lead to outbursts, and you generally are evading them to protect yourself"

School Map 4:
Young people felt that there was a risk of harassment in Brixton and nearby areas. In this map, a pupil says 'travelling through Brixton, sometimes you get cat-called'.

Fast-food restaurants allow young people to affordably socialise with friends. But it can be a challenging environment to maintain safety as different groups of young people cross paths, including those belonging to, or affiliated to gangs. Because of this, young people viewed it as being prone to conflict.

School Map 5:
Due to the lack of public, affordable, youth orientated spaces, pupils spend a lot of time in commercial spaces like McDonald's and chicken shops. In this map, a pupil has labelled McDonald's the 'youth centre'.

Without effective support from adults in the wider community to protect them from, intervene in or manage conflict or violence, young people felt unprotected from potential harm. A significant minority of young people we heard from highlighted how adults did not always play an active role in supporting community safety. Some of these young people described adults as witnesses to conflict between young people or harassment from other adults. But they failed to intervene or act as an active bystander. New, richer residents (often white and middle-class) were also perceived to erode an existing sense of community, living separately and sometimes hostile to young people.

School Map 6:
Visible drug addiction and substance misuse were a common part of the local environment for young people. In this map, pupils note how there are 'crackheads in the bus'.

## Insight 3: Poor housing conditions make young people feel unsafe.

For some young people, home was a space they could relax and find comfort. Well maintained play areas, green space or sports facilities enabled young people to play and connect safely with family, friends, and familiar neighbours. These offered important structures for psychosocial support and security.

" The football cage is very good for people that are staying at home and being bored. They can come out to play, support, make new friends, stay healthy."

" It looks peaceful and beautiful here… I get along with my neighbours."

School Map 7:
Local sports facilities were a hopeful space for many young people. In this map, a pupil explains how 'they are important because they help me improve how I play football.'
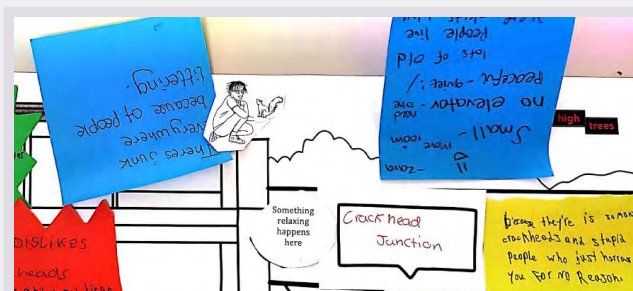
School Map 8:
Young people often felt a sense of shame in their immediate living conditions. In this map, pupils have named their housing and local streets 'Crackhead Junction' and complained that 'there's junk everywhere because of people littering'

But many of the young people we heard from felt frustrated by the deteriorating conditions of their homes and social housing estates. Experiences of overcrowding, damp, and problems such as broken lifts in their buildings contributed to poor physical and emotional health. It also reduced their sense of pride in the local area.

Dark underpasses, poor street lighting, litter, unrepaired play areas or abandoned flats meant that communal areas were used for drug use, criminal activity, or anti-social behaviour by older peers. These features determined where young people felt comfortable going, what they enjoyed doing and if they could do so on their own.

" The way it looks like urm yeah... it's old, dusty and things are just left there on the floor and yeah... um obviously no one really wants to see that every day."
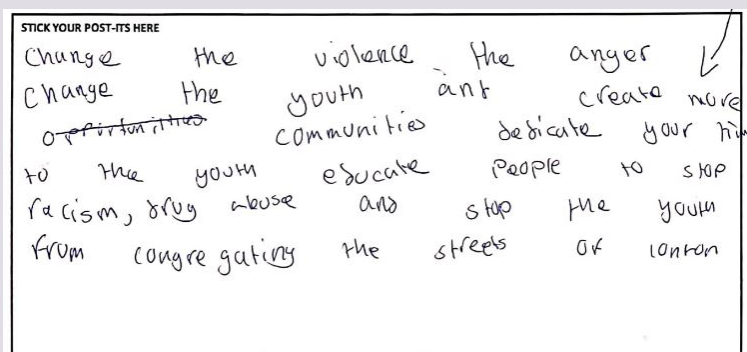
Some young people suggested that there was a lack of support from the Local Authority to fix problems or take care of their estates. This left young people feeling powerless and abandoned. High levels of visible homelessness on estates and surrounding streets were also a reminder of the position they could easily find themselves in.

" Well obviously because it's dark now, adding more lights on to the streets would be helpful."

Insight 4: Many young people feel that they cannot rely on public services and feel cut off from important opportunities.

At times, many of the young people we spoke to did not feel protected or supported by public services because of racism and discrimination. They often described being unheard, disrespected and treated without dignity by adults who were meant to protect and support them. These young people were especially likely to express a lack of trust in people who hold power and hopelessness about their futures.

Young people who were connected into strong structured youth provision had much better access to support and safe spaces outside of school and the home. These young people were more likely to access opportunities and could reach out to trusted adults or peers when they needed help. We found that these spaces and services were protective factors against violence for young people.

STICK YOUR POST-ITS HERE

Change the violence the anger
Change the youth ant create more
opportunities communities desicate your time
to the youth educate people to stop
racism, drug abuse and stop the youth
from congregating the streets of london

School Map 9:
Young people were usually very clear about the things that needed changing to improve safety in their local areas. In this map, pupils write a list of demands including 'educate people to stop racism' and 'create more opportunities'

4.1 Many young Black people feel unprotected and targeted by the police

Many of the young Black people we spoke to felt unprotected by the police. These perceptions and experiences shaped how safe they felt in their neighbourhoods and whether they were adequately protected against crime or violence. Racist profiling and targeting of Black people, especially of boys and men, through stop and search practices were common experiences. Hostile or aggressive interactions left some young people vulnerable to psychological harm and, at times, disproportionate physical force from the police. Some young people highlighted that being a child, wearing school uniform or being unaffiliated with gangs did not prevent them from being targeted as a threat or risk to society. These feelings were intensified by police presence and searches in some schools.

*" My cousin was just outside his house and got stopped and searched... you don't
expect the people protecting you to constantly have a target on you."*

" [Talking about the police] You can't stop violence with violence"

Many were unaware of what to do when being stopped to protect themselves from hostile
encounters. Some felt that stop and search failed to identify or effectively target young
people involved with crime. Increased police presence in some areas by undercover police
was commonly noticed by many of these young people and undermined their sense of
safety on their estates.
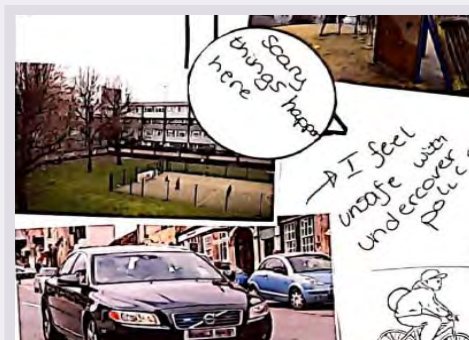
School Map 10:
Partly due to police violence and racial profiling, police
could make some young people feel unsafe. In this map,
a pupil says 'I feel unsafe with undercover police'

Whilst not all young Black people were fearful of contact with the police, these encounters
contributed to the desensitisation and powerlessness young people feel towards violence.

*" I was worried because I've never been stopped and searched before and how
they stopped and searched. When I searched online it wasn't the correct way.
They put me in handcuffs first before asking questions. "*

Young people were conflicted about the role they wanted police to play in supporting
community safety. This was partly dependent on how likely they were to be targeted and
stereotyped by police. Some young people, particularly Latin American migrants, believed
that more police on streets would help to prevent youth violence. Others felt that reducing
police presence would make them feel safer.
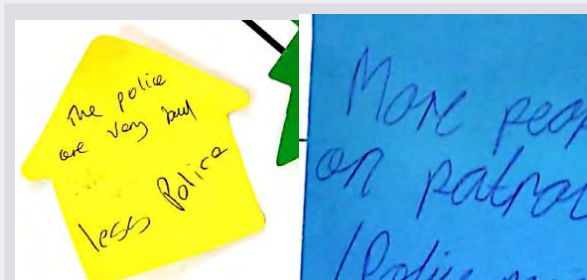
School Map 11:
Police were a contentious issue for young
people. In this map a pupil calls for 'less
police', while in the other, a pupil asks for
'more [police] on patrol'.

4.2 School and education isn't always a safe space for young people

For young people, school was considered an important structure that shaped their lives. Friendships made at school were incredibly important to a sense of safety, protection and solidarity in the face of everyday violence. Access to facilities like libraries, football pitches or basketball courts supported young people's learning and allowed them to have fun with peers.

But for many, school highlighted inequalities and barriers to learning, support and safety. Many young people we spoke to experienced education as disciplinary. This was reflected in the use of school exclusions to manage vulnerable young people, the presence of police in schools, as well as differential and harsher treatment of Black pupils compared to other racial groups. Some young people felt misunderstood, unheard, and disrespected by teachers, leading them to disengage with learning. At times, this made school an uncaring and hostile environment to be in.

" I mean no one should have to worry about having to be searched at school searching for any kind of knives or weapons"

Often, schools lacked the holistic support and relevant resources needed to manage their complex needs. Young people spoke to us about the need for more relevant education and opportunities that could prepare them for adulthood. For most young people we spoke to in schools, this was the first opportunity they had to talk about youth associated violence and and its impact on their lives. Many talked about early or peer mentoring support for young people to prevent violence affecting young people as well as emotional support for young people after incidents occurred.

" I think it might be better if we just took a general approach in schools... but I think it might be more direct if we have more discussions about certain things certain topics like what really resonates with… what affects people"

4.3 Local youth centres and provision help young people to manage the uncertainty in their lives and find support

Youth centres offered a different perspective on life for young people and opened up new opportunities and possibilities for them. This hope was vital in feeling safe and not feeling trapped in difficult neighbourhood conditions. Many young people we heard from wanted spaces to express themselves, access holistic opportunities and safely connect with others.

" It's always good to have that place where you don't have to be out on the streets or out on the road … you can just be calm down here. You may not know people around you around you but that's where you make friends and that's why you see everyone's different path"

Young people who were connected to facilities or youth provision had much better access to emotional support, new opportunities, mentorship, and safe spaces to socialise in. These young people were able to reach out to adults they trusted and a strong social network when they needed help. It also helped them to manage the unpredictability in their lives and offered exposure to new experiences.

" For example, this, this is a wonderful place, this whole Spiral organisation. It's kind of beautiful because it's exactly the change that you lot are tryna make… people need to expand themselves more, people need to be exposed and know that it's not just a darker path that awaits you"

" If the parents aren't there to speak to, like that they aren't there, they're working or something, and maybe the kids needs to speak. Well, that are organizations like IRMO that can be with the young people to help them speak."

" [High Trees] Adventure Playground is important to me because ever since I've been coming here, I've felt more safe here and the staff are super kind and respectful"

Some spoke about how youth centres enabled young people from different walks of life or different paths to connect. Run by respected and trusted adults, these spaces also facilitated healthy management of conflict, encouraging young people to share the same space respectfully even if they didn't get along.

" That behaviour that you're doing out there doesn't need to be brought in here. And if you had the respect to come in here, then you have the respect to be cool. Even if you do see someone you don't like, don't start nothing"

But if these spaces weren't available close to where they lived, young people felt cut off from the resources and opportunities they needed to thrive. Because of gang and peer violence directed at outsiders, young people who travelled to different areas to play football or attend centres sometimes felt more at risk of harm and violence.

Young people also recognised how poorly managed youth provision, where there was a lack of trusted adults, could have negative repercussions for young people. This had the potential to create conditions for violence as conflicts between young people were not managed in constructive way.

Insight 5: There is a mental and emotional burden young people carry to keep safe and avoid potential harm

Being aware of violence changes young people's ability to feel safe. Some young people we heard from had been victims of or witnessed violence themselves. Others had lost loved ones or had friends who were victims. Sometimes young people knew about incidents in their local area. These experiences affected their mental health and wellbeing through grief, fear, and hopelessness. Some young people spoke to us about how distorted media coverage could also unnecessarily worry people even if they were not at risk.

" *No one should have to leave home knowing their son or child might not come back and it's very upsetting I know like as a community mourning"*

It's very close to home, it's touching you. In fact, someone that you were just talking to suddenly is dead"

Young people used different strategies to cope with everyday violence and avoid harm. Feeling powerless or trapped in their lives interacted with having to be hypervigilant all the time. This made some young people more desensitised towards violence and intensified the feeling that violence is an inevitable and unavoidable part of life.

5.1 Using awareness of violence to avoid dangerous situations

For young people who were aware of violence, they learned how to identify a potentially dangerous situation and what to do to keep safe. Street awareness helped them to feel like they had more choice about whether they want to engage with violence or not. Many used these strategies every day. This affected the spaces they felt safe in and how they spent their time. For example:

- Staying at home and avoiding going out
- Thinking carefully about where they can go
- Taking different routes to places they visit
- Planning how they travel there
- Identifying where safety exits are in public spaces
- Travelling or socialising in groups
- Avoiding being out at night
- Being vigilant and pre-empting what might happen in certain situations
- Being aware of unspoken gestures or the tone of someone's voice
- Wearing cheap clothes/not carrying around expensive items.

" I believe in wrong place, wrong timing."

" Yeah, there was this moment where there was a lot of it… It was crazy and like people weren't being allowed out, like even to go like my friends and have to go home early."

" There's youth violence, but me, I just don't get involved in that. Just the other day, my friend got jumped by 20 guys… I did not put my hoodie on that day, I did not wear my tech. I wore the cheapest stuff I own that day."

" There's not a specific place I wouldn't go to… but there are places I know where to chill a bit."

5.2 Coping can come with young people being desensitised toward violence being inevitable

Many young people spoke about violence and avoiding harm as a normal part of their life. At times this was used to mask the emotional burden and traumatic impact of the violence they experienced. They commonly expressed that violence will inevitably happen in their neighbourhood and nothing can be done about it. These experiences left some young people feeling powerless to stop youth violence.

" It's happened before in the past and I've had to dealt with it… witnessing that... the experience and that so seeing it again, I won't say it's like I've gotten used to it, obviously I've seen it before so just had to deal with it the same way"

" It's just normal, I don't think anything about it [the violence] anymore."

Some talked about how they refused to let violence stop them from doing what they wanted. Others expressed isolation, avoiding situations or people that may make them vulnerable. Living in unpleasant conditions or being cut-off from important opportunities because of where they come from left many feeling that the odds were stacked against them.

" Things have happened before but that's how life is."

" Take it on the chin."

Insight 6: Many young people feel they don't have control over their lives and futures

Violence affecting young people exacerbated the uncertainty in their lives as it made young people feel powerless. Racism and economic inequalities brought into focus the huge institutional barriers and discrimination they faced. Young Black people saw racism as limiting their career options and the chance to be successful. Homelessness and lack of basic support for people struggling in their neighbourhoods served as a constant reminder of the precarity of life. This often left many young people feeling like they had no control over their choices.

ONE THING WE COULD CHANGE TOGETHER TO REDUCE VIOLENCE...

Is give me youm stuff to do give them opportunities to make money so they wont feel like they have to join a gang or try to kill the groomers bring the community together b4 more time they see what happens

School map 12:
On one map, a group of young people point to the need for meaningful opportunities that provide financial security as a way to prevent grooming by gangs.

Many young people wanted help to realise their next step in life. They often talked about the need for more meaningful and accessible opportunities to help them grow and succeed. Worries about safety and the ability to travel to different neighbourhoods can impact some young people's ability to access existing youth provision. Others felt that existing opportunities may not always be relevant to their needs or specific interests.

" Yeah if the government helps with like building recreational centres, having more of the fest that happen today, involving the youths in what will help them in the future because if you just continue this, you can't set the foundation for future generations"

" All of the youths, if they are using the time that they use to stay on the road doing all those bad things, use it to be productive…like maybe if someone has boxing, sport…go to engineering you can work for that…you can learn how to cook… than staying just on the street and causing a mess"

Developing support and increasing funding from central or local government for provision and services was seen as a way to empower young people by increasing the choices they have. This included improving housing conditions and investing in communal spaces on estates to make them safer.

" People need to be proactive in the roots of things and stop things from happening from the beginning because once it starts, it gets hard to change the storyline."
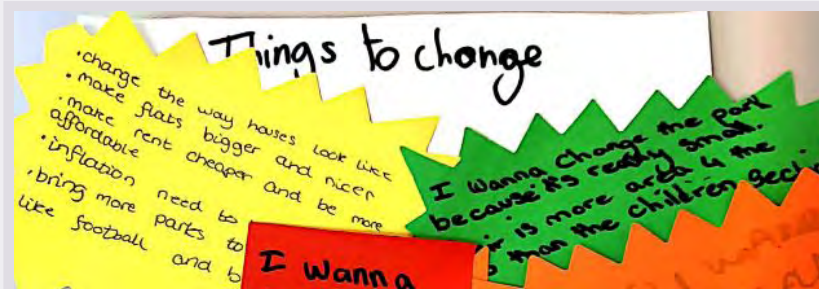
School map 13: Among the many local changes suggested to improve safety, young people also called for structural changes, mentioning affordable rent and bringing down inflation.

Part Two: Social Action

Moving to Social Action

From the outset, the LPAC Partnership aimed to create opportunities for young people to respond to the findings from the peer research and to identify solutions and ways to build a safer environment for young people in Lambeth.

Using the insights from the research, the peer research team have begun to develop ideas to identify solutions and build campaigns to demand better opportunities, housing and an education system that works for all young people. The work to develop these campaigns has involved over 200 young people to date.

Talk It Out sessions and recruiting young people to lead social action

The preliminary research findings were shared with the peer researchers to verify the findings and whether they truly represented the experience and voice of young people. This 'member checking' process brought an additional insight that violence was an almost inevitable experience for the young people who had taken part in the research.

The findings generated further discussion between the peer researchers and High Trees Community Action team around the structural inequalities that underpinned this experience of young people and the kinds of actions that could potentially be taken to respond to the issues raised in the research.

Visual minutes from the Opportunities Talk it Out session
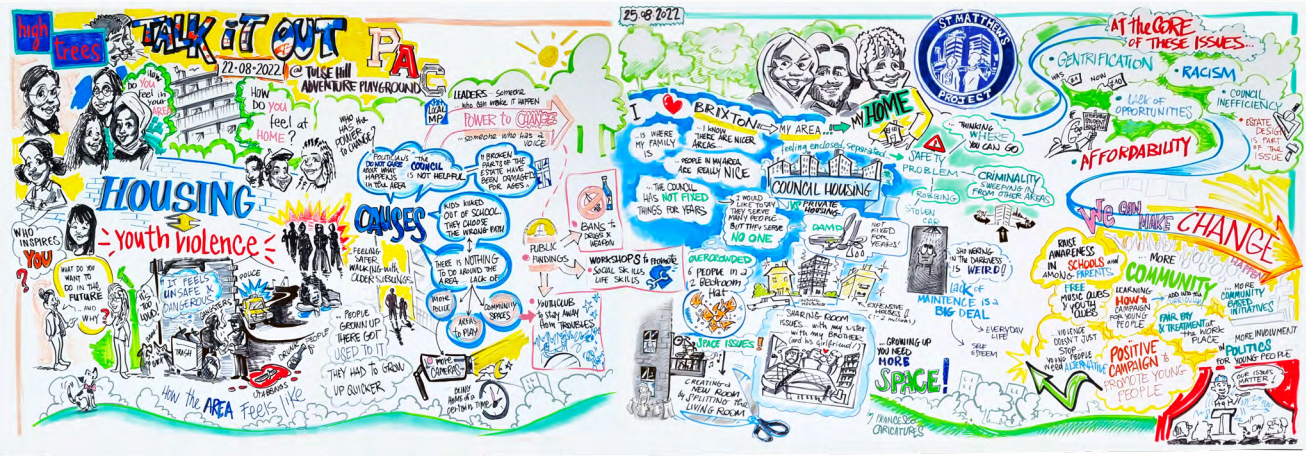
Visual minutes from the Housing Talk it Out session

Discussions between the peer researchers and High Trees Community Action team highlighted several thematic areas:

- Housing
- Opportunities
- Education
- Gendered Violence
- Police and Policing

The peer researchers were asked to prioritise each thematic area according to the issue they felt most strongly about and that which they felt would generate the most interest from young people. This led to the three following campaign areas being identified:

- Opportunities (and lack of)
- Education
- Housing

These thematic areas were then used as the basis for four Talk it Out sessions in which 47 young people from across the LPAC partnership were able to offer their perspectives. Following a brief introduction to the research and findings, young people were asked to discuss the extent to which the findings and following thematic area related to their personal experience. They then considered their perspective against that of their peers and considered what the potential solutions could be/ what positive action could be taken. These discussions were facilitated using a pro-action workshop methodology[20] and a graphic artist attended each of the Talk it Out sessions to capture the discussion.

At the end of each session, young people aged 16-20 were invited to continue their involvement by becoming 'Changemaker Leads'. These were paid positions in which young people would take a lead role in developing and delivering social action. 22 young people came forward to be Changemaker Leads.
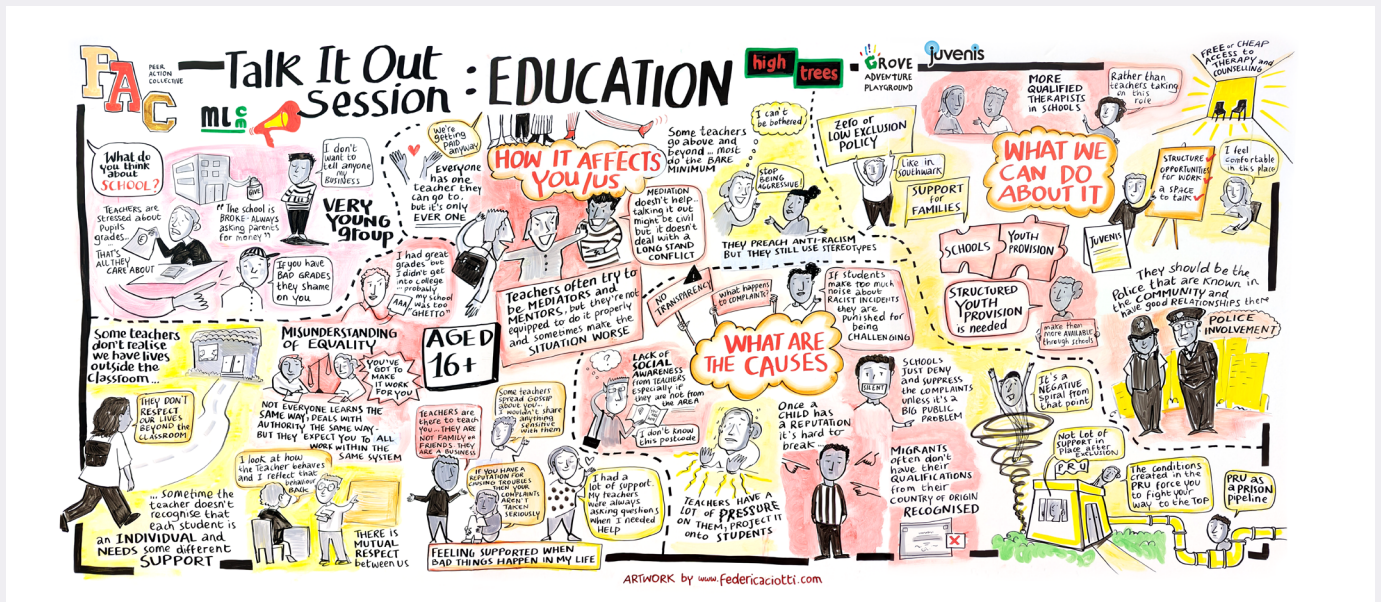
Visual minutes from the Education Talk it Out session

Campaign development

Three intensive weeks of campaign development followed in which both the peer researchers and Changemaker Leads worked with the High Trees Community Action team to refine their campaigns and the specific demands they wished to make to generate change. Over nine evening sessions, young people were supported to develop several broad asks for each thematic area (for example 'properly funded youth provision', accompanied by specific demands (for example 'structured and supervised after-school youth provision on or near every social housing estate in Lambeth, at least four days per week'). Young people were also provided with training and support around the practical aspects of running their campaign.

Building wider engagement

At the end of the three weeks, three large campaign events were held at LPAC partner organisations to build wider engagement with young people around each campaign. These were scheduled at times of peak service delivery to ensure as many young people were able to attend as possible. 194 young people were able to engage with the demands in each campaign through a variety of creative and interactive activities. These events established a stronger base for each campaign and demonstrated wider support for each of the demands across the partnership.

Finalising the manifesto

A final event was held in November 2022 with LPAC partners and young people to refine the demands within the manifesto and to consider all the feedback from young people who had attended events over the social action stage. Once the manifesto was finalised, three campaign videos were developed by young people to effectively communicate their demands. These are hosted on the LPAC website alongside the LPAC manifesto – see www.lambethpac.com.

A Manifesto for Change

It's clear that without safety and security that young people deserve, it is difficult to tackle the root causes of youth violence locally. Unsurprisingly, better opportunities, housing and an education system that works for all young people are persistently areas of concern for young people to break this cycle.

Our manifesto, created by young people, outlines twelve opportunities for local funders, statutory service providers and policymakers to help build a safer, protective, and more caring ecosystem for young people in Lambeth to grow up in.

Opportunities

Without a leg up, intergenerational poverty will continue to pull down the chances of young people in Lambeth. While we've seen the area change and certain businesses thrive, many of the benefits of regeneration are not being felt by families who have lived here all their lives. It forces young people to ask: who is this regeneration for? We ask: how can we ensure we benefit from regeneration?

1. No more regeneration without opportunities for us.

The benefits of regeneration are not felt equally, often cutting out long-time and low-income residents. In turn this deepens local inequality and access to opportunities. With a new approach to development, the benefits can be spread further.

What this could look like:

- Require social benefit clauses within planning permission to ensure development and construction creates jobs for young people.

- Ensure that any redevelopment or development site has a percentage of Section 106 money ring-fenced for youth services, and co-design how it is spent with young people.

2. Jobs with local businesses.

While business might appear to be booming in Lambeth, few businesses hire young people on a good wage. Having good opportunities available reduces the pull of illicit ways of making money.

What this could look like:

- Work with a representative group of young people on creating incentives for local businesses to employ local young people.

- Clear opportunities for young people (16+) to gain part-time jobs with employers. Launch a website to advertise local jobs with specific roles suitable for young people.

3. Consistent & accessible guidance & support.

Well designed and high- quality guidance, advice and mentoring can make an enormous difference to life outcomes of young people, creating opportunities for otherwise unattainable life paths.

What this could look like:

- High quality career advice for all 16–18-year-olds in schools and community settings.

- Introduce "Best Mentoring Programme" to Lambeth Made Business Charter Awards.

- Involve young people in grant-making processes for designing and administering funding for youth services.

4. Educate young people on how to make and keep money.

Modules of financial education in state schools barely scratch the surface, leaving young people unprepared for life beyond the classroom. A good foundation on the basics of finance and business will give young people the knowledge to better take advantage of opportunities when they do arrive.

What this could look like:

- Provide a module on personal finance and entrepreneurship to all school students between years 9 and 11.

Housing

When your estate is under-invested, damp and crowded, how are you supposed to feel about your place in society? Unsafe housing, rising rents and living costs and a lack of good quality youth provision create conditions for people to find supplementary income 'on the road', or simply lower their ambitions. Whether you're a social or private tenant or a homeowner, housing policy must prioritise resident wellbeing.

5. Safe and decent homes for all.

Poor quality housing is a significant cause of stress for many families, and young people are no exception. Homes should feel safe, problems should be fixed properly and quickly, and landlords should be accountable.

What this could look like:

- Work with resident groups on a new enforcement strategy.
- Make details of all contracted services online.
- Publicise housing advice surgeries within schools and provide housing surgeries at accessible times.

6. Properly funded youth provision.

The gutting of Council-run youth services has led to charities having to pick up the pieces and hold it together. Yet there is inadequate funding available to keep these services performing to the standard required, and a lack of local services can direct young people into neighbourhoods where they face danger

What this could look like:

- Regular structured and supervised after-school youth provision on or near social housing.
- Involve young people in grant-making processes for youth provision.
- Protect good existing local youth organisations and their spaces from redevelopment.

7. No more regeneration without our input.

Many housing developments have been designed with maximum efficiency as the highest priority and feature many instances of poor planning and hostile architecture. Going forward, having a youth and resident voice in aspects of design will be essential.

What this could look like:

Commit to support resident co-design of any development of 10 dwellings or more, including a representative group of young people paid at London Living Wage.

8. Support with the cost of living.

The cost-of-living crisis will only add further pressure on young people to seek out illicit ways of making money, and become entangled in the cycle of violence. Stronger support, and better accessibility for what already exists, may make the difference to stay out of trouble.

What this could look like:

- Provide weekly food shopping vouchers for all families with children who are eligible for free school meals.
- Introduce breakfast club for every primary school in the borough.
- Schools communicate and signpost local cost of living support, both statutory and voluntary, in different media and languages

Education

When a young person's first contact with school is shaped by a lack of understanding and even rejection, it can lead them down a path of someone who has learned that they are disposable, or at least incompatible with mainstream education. What might an education system look like if it were to more proactively support young people at the start, before it gets harder to change the path they're heading down?

9. An emphasis on support, not just discipline.

Fixed term exclusions and placement in alternative provision has been proven to lead to further abandonment by the system, and a higher probability of entering the criminal justice system. Other local authorities and schools have committed to finding alternatives, and Lambeth should be no exception.

What this could look like:

- Make a public commitment, like our neighbours in Southwark, to reduce exclusions to as close to zero as possible.
- Provide advice, training and support to young people and families affected by school exclusions and off-rolling

10. School staff who treat us as individuals and understand our lives.

Many neurodiverse pupils and those with adverse childhood experiences are less likely to receive the support that could get them through school. A better understanding of their needs, at an earlier stage, will benefit their chances of staying within the system and completing education.

What this could look like:

- Independent counselling and support for pupils struggling with mental health, including one to one counselling, group work, or even a family practitioner.

- Ensure all school staff are fully trained in identifying learning difficulties, neurodivergence, and disability, with policies specifying how families or individuals can refer in for screening or support.

11. An education system that works for us.

Schools often lack transparency about issues that come up between students and/or staff, and in particular about the action being taken. Addressing these processes would improve trust between students, parents, and school staff.

What this could look like:

- Issue a simple communication explaining the complaints process for your school and commit to all formal complaints receiving a written response.
- Teachers, students and parents to help shape school accountability efforts.

12. Commitment to anti-racism & anti-discrimination.

Racism and discrimination within schools has been shown to be a contributing factor to alienation from mainstream education. Antiracist reforms have been claimed by many schools, however the execution of these intentions can often be left wanting.

What this could look like:

- Commit to an annual evaluation of how your schools is implementing your antiracist and anti-discrimination policies.
- Commit to developing curriculum modules which more accurately reflect the Black and Brown contribution throughout history, literature, and science, which schools can be encouraged to adopt.

Endnotes

1   Metropolitan Police, 2023; MOPAC, 2022

2   Metropolitan Police, 2023

3   Abt, 2017; Bellis et al., 2012; Shrotri, 2019; World Health Organization, 2015

4   Shrotri, 2019

5   Kincaid et al., 2019

6   Wieshmann et al., 2020

7   Hughes et al., 2017; Smith and Wynne-McHardy, 2019

8   Wieshmann et al., 2020

9   Wieshmann et al., 2020

10 Shrotri, 2019; Wieshmann et al., 2020

11 Shrotri, 2019; Wieshmann et al., 2020

12 Beresford, 2013; Kindon et al., 2007

13 Cahill et al., 2007; Wang, 2006, 1999; Yang and Dibb, 2020

14 Cahill, 2007; Kindon, 2007; Wang, 2006, 1999)

15 Yang and Dibb, 2020

16 Best, 2003; Byrne, 2012

17 Green and Thorogood, 2004

18 Clark, 2010

19 Cahill, 2007; Kindon, 2007

20 Pro Action Cafe | SessionLab

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