

Chapter 2 Engagement

NATIONAL TARGET

PSA 6: Increase voluntary and community engagement, especially amongst those who are at risk of exclusion.

This chapter is about us, the community of Lambeth. It not only includes those that live and work in our borough, but also those that travel through or visit it.

If we want to work with and effectively engage with our communities we have to understand:

- What makes a community
- How we can make our communities effective
- How we can support our communities to find solutions.

Lambeth has rich and vibrant communities, often intermingled and interchangeable. A person might be described as part of a community according to where they live or work, their religion or culture, whom they socialise with, their age, sexual orientation or family. Identity and belonging make a community and it is clear from our Crime and Disorder Audit and from the work we have done on the Community Strategy that the best way of making our communities effective is to give them, us, the ability to make a difference.

The DAAT/CDRP believe that the best way to approach this is not to label 'communities' but to give people the knowledge, support and ability to

make that difference through as wide a range of interactive methods as possible.

This may appear to be an ambitious plan but it is one that is supported at a regional and national level. Lambeth is a borough which can make this agenda work, not just because of the agencies working in the area, but because Lambeth's strength is in the commitment of our communities who want to live and work in a safer and more secure environment.

The partnership have set out below an engagement approach which is based on the following;

- Broad information direct to households and individuals on personal safety, where to get support and advice and how to get involved.
- A range of geographical forums using our current structures and adding specific links through tenants, residents and business forums.
- Specific panels set up on crime themes by area or aimed at reaching specific community groups such as BME, LGBT, disabled or age-related groups.

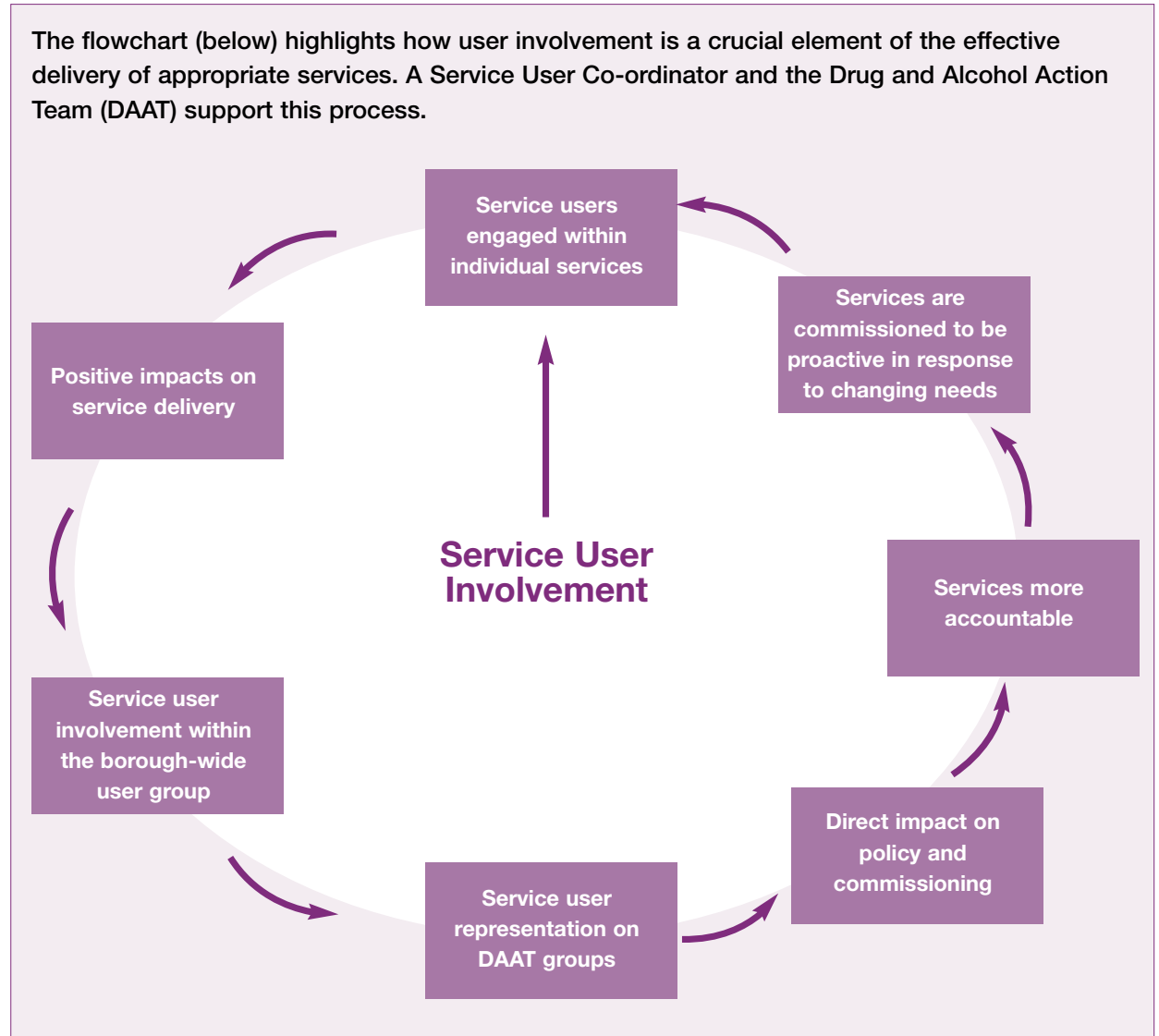
Drugs and Alcohol

What do we mean by drugs and alcohol and engagement?

Establishing an effective community-focused engagement process in relation to drugs and alcohol is one of our biggest challenges, in terms of the range of issues involved. Some actions are highlighted below and illustrate the extent of the agenda:

- Continue to work closely with BME communities who are often most at risk of illegal drug markets.
- Support and build capacity to improve life choices and, where required, the ability to access treatment.
- Establish and develop User Forums and include users in other areas related to community safety, health and prevention.
- Undertake awareness training and capacity building at a local and estate level, focusing on communities who are most vulnerable to illegal drug or alcohol-related problems.
- Develop local projects (involving residents in the design and delivery) specifically focusing on problems that they face such as drug users, prostitution or cultural issues. Identify models of good practice and share these across the borough.

The flowchart (below) highlights how user involvement is a crucial element of the effective delivery of appropriate services. A Service User Co-ordinator and the Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) support this process.



- Support of street sex workers (SSW) from a range of agencies to address substance misuse and other related issues, including homelessness.
- Identify national programmes that may be available which can be used at a local level to support BME or LGBT communities to build long-term support and resources within those communities.
- Improve communication both at a local level and borough-wide particularly through existing forums and committees such as Lambeth First.
- Engage with the street drinker and street population community to improve support and reduce their risk.
- Engage with the business community, particularly the licensing trade, who can play a major role in improving the environmental management of the area and communities that they serve.
- Engage with the people who enjoy the social and night-time economy with a safety and health focus in relation to the impacts of drugs and alcohol.
- Work with BME communities whose cultural perspective on drugs or alcohol may place them in conflict with other communities.

Violent Crime

What do we mean by violent crime and engagement?

Violent crime includes any incident, which has either a physical or psychological impact on the victim. This is regardless of whether the incident is defined by behaviour, action, intent or motivation.

Whilst Lambeth has seen some real successes in the reduction of robbery over the last three years, violent crime remains a serious concern for our communities, with a particular focus on:

- Alcohol-related violence, in particular ABH, GBH, domestic violence and common assault
- Sexual assaults
- Violence associated with gangs or groups
- Drug-related violence.

Results from our 796 face-to-face interviews for the audit showed that of those who had experienced violent crime, only 53% reported it to the police. There has also been a reduction in the levels of referrals to Victim Support.

What did the audit tell us?

- Respondents to the face-to-face survey stated that they had experienced physical mugging and assault in Brixton more than anywhere else.
- 14% said that they had seen a gun in Brixton.
- 19% from North Lambeth reported seeing a gun.
- 55% of respondents cited feeling unsafe because of gangs in an area.
- 51% of interviewees who experienced violent crime in the last year stated that a 'group' were the perpetrators.
- When asked 'Why do you feel unsafe?' 24% cited guns, knives and other weapons.
- Of the 796 face-to-face interviews, 15% said that they had experienced mugging in the last five years and 8.4% had experienced mugging in the last 12 months, with 1.3% being a repeat victim.
- 3.5% of the respondents have been physically assaulted, 2.9% threatened with a knife, 1.9% a victim of hate crime and 1% threatened by a gun.
- 73% of respondents, who had experienced a violent incident, said that the incident was carried out by a stranger.

- Only half of the recent victims of violent crime reported this incident to the Police (53%). Reporting was more common amongst White respondents (26 out of 42 incidents) than it was for Black/Black British victims (11 out of 23 incidents).
- Of those respondents who had experienced a violent incident, nearly 90% reported the incident to family or friends.
- Participants in our focus groups, in particular: LGBT communities, the Asian community and young people, felt it necessary to change their behaviour and appearance in order to reduce the likelihood of being targeted for violence.
- Respondents to our self-completion survey indicated that in the last 12 months, 39% of them or a member of their household had been a victim of crime in Lambeth. Of this percentage, 4.3% had been a victim of physical assault, 2.5% were threatened with a knife and 2% experienced hate crime.
- A significant number of council staff have previously been a victim of crime such as threatening and abusive behaviour, road rage attack and mugging.

In response to these findings our engagement programme will concentrate on:

- Improving our community support provision for victims and witnesses of violent crime, based in local areas.
- Better use of health-related support for victims of sexual assault.
- Establishing a regional Gang Strategy and a Gang Intervention programme.
- Engaging with the licensing trade, businesses and in particular small businesses, health providers and local communities to address violence associated with alcohol, focusing initially on key local areas.
- Working on particular estates where violence against the person is highest.
- Collating data from A&E departments on admissions that are alcohol or drug-related.

Young People

What do we mean by young people and engagement?

Children and young people under 25 should be central to shaping and delivering appropriate, targeted and successful services that enable them to achieve their aspirations and to have ownership of their rights and responsibilities. There is a clear need, identified through our audit, to support our young people who are often affected by crime, either as victims or as offenders. Ensuring that young people help shape and deliver programmes that help address the disproportionate impact on them will ensure that they are seen as part of the solution to improving community safety, rather than solely as a cause of crime.

What did the audit tell us?

We need:

- Better data and mapping of services for young people.
- To address the community safety issues affecting young people, in particular alcohol and drug misuse, and gangs and guns.

- A significant increase in services for children and young people that place them at the heart of delivery.
- To work to improve relationships between young people and the Police as well as other statutory services, such as the Fire Service.
- Better education around the involvement in and consequences of crime and taking responsibility for their actions.

Of those respondents to our Young People's Community Safety Questionnaire:

- 20% of respondents report crime and only 12% of those reported the crime to the Police. When asked why, the respondents said they do not have much faith in the Police and in their complaint being taken seriously.
- 50% of respondents said they would know where to get help for a drug or alcohol problem.
- 70% indicated they thought drug users are more likely to commit crime and 55% that they are more likely to be a victim of crime.

Victims and Witnesses

What do we mean by victims and witnesses and engagement?

Supporting people in our communities who have experienced crime and those who have been witnesses to a crime is an essential part of our focus for two reasons:

1. The impact of a crime does not stop at the victims but influences their friends, family and local community. Our Lambeth Community Safety Audit 2004 highlighted that a victim of crime is more likely to tell a friend or family member than report it to the Police or another public body. How the victim is treated when they do report an incident can be instrumental in influencing how that person, their friends, family and community interact with the Police or a public body in the future. We need to get it right in terms of the victim and their needs.
2. A witness, someone who takes a stand against the minority who cause crime, is the best person to encourage other members of our communities to take action. There are excellent examples of how witnesses and witness groups who, through sharing their own experiences, have supported other witnesses in stopping crime and anti social behaviour.

Victims and witnesses of crime and anti social behaviour have told us that effective engagement for them means four things:

1. Support when the incident happens
2. Support and regular information during the legal processes even when things are not going to plan
3. Support, information, contact and continued security after the legal process
4. The ability to keep control of the process.

The ability to keep control of the process is central to successful engagement. According to our victims and witnesses, many of them feel that they are swept up in a process that has little reference to them and the trauma they have and may be continuing to experience.

What did the audit tell us?

- 42% of residents surveyed said that drug dealers in the area made them feel unsafe.
- Only 20% of our young people who responded to our Young People's Questionnaire, reported crime and only 12% of these reported the crime to the Police.
- When asked why, the respondents said they do not have much faith in the Police and in their complaint being taken seriously.



“When they mugged me three times, it wasn't night, it was daytime, twice in the afternoon, and I was fighting with the guy and people were just walking by and nobody cared. I was screaming ‘help me’.”

Quote from focus group attendee, Crime and Disorder Audit 2004 consultation.



Priority Crime

What do we mean by priority crime and engagement?

Tackling priority crimes such as burglary, robbery, motor vehicle crime, drug related crime, and anti social behaviour is often seen as the job of the Police and the council. Engaging with our communities over priority crime often focuses on one-way intelligence, from local residents to public bodies.

What did the audit tell us?

- There is under-reporting across most priority crimes.
- Burglary is becoming more prevalent in non-estate areas.
- There is a lack of support for victims and witnesses.
- Better and more consistent data is needed.
- Further investment in reassurance is needed.
- We need to increase awareness amongst residents, businesses, neighbourhoods and communities about their responsibility and encourage them to take pride in their area.
- Collaborative work with the community around drugs is needed.

- The anti social use of mopeds, vandalism and abandoned cars are key concerns.

Lambeth has a track record of success over the last three years in reducing priority crimes but if we want to continue this success story we need to make sure that:

- All of our communities know what to do to keep themselves and their property safe.
- Communication is two way and effective, particularly for victims of crime and communities who are experiencing crime.
- Community safety is part of other local agendas rather than just a problem on its own. For example, working with young people should focus on life choices and opportunities rather than pure crime diversion and anti-crime messages.
- We establish local community panels to initiate a **Problem Solving**⁸ approach to enable residents to make a difference in their local area.

There are excellent examples in our borough, such as St Martin's Estate and Clapham Park, where local communities working with key bodies have made a real difference to priority crime. This has been achieved by focusing on the local needs of residents and the DAAT/CDRP wants to build on these successes.

⁸ Problem Solving looks at identifying and dealing with the root causes of a problem, instead of repeatedly responding to the consequences.

Communication

What do we mean by communication and engagement?

Effective communication does not just mean telling people what is happening. A clear message from our consultation work throughout our audit, from all of our communities is that they want to be involved in local delivery rather than just being asked about community safety. This was a particularly strong message from our young people.

What did our audit tell us?

- Findings from our audit consultation indicated that worries about crime tend to be found more commonly amongst women, older people, disabled people, the poor, the victimised and those in communities with little social cohesion.
- More visible Policing, CCTV, wardens or Police Community Support Officers were identified as factors in making people feel safer. Cleaner environments (29%) and better information (15%) were also prioritised.
- Young people who participated in our consultation and focus groups said that increased youth provision as well as the availability of more engaging and innovative activities in existing youth clubs, would help to reduce youth-related crime.

- Findings from the residents' survey indicate what would make them feel unsafe. These are set out below and are also compared to findings from our previous audit.

There are four clear strands of our communications process:

- Information on keeping safe, getting help and how to play a role.
- Activity by agencies which encourage and enable local communities to participate in making their area safe.

- Support of communities through funding awareness or training to take action, or of individuals or groups to take a stand.
- Methods of engagement through committees, forums, panels, e-government or direct to households and individuals by area or through particular panels for BME, LGBT, disabled people or other groups of people within our borough.

What makes you feel unsafe?

2004 Audit		1998-2001 Audit	
Gangs in the area	55%	Street crime	57%
Reputation of the area	50%	Dark street	42%
Drug dealers in the area	42%	Burglary	35%
Drug users in the area	38%	Dangerous traffic	24%
Guns, knives and other weapons	24%	Drug dealing	19%
Street drinking	21%	Drug use in public	10%