

# Chapter 3 Reassurance

## NATIONAL TARGET

**PSA 2: Reassure the public, reduce the fear of crime and anti social behaviour, and build confidence in the Criminal Justice System without compromising fairness**

Making our communities safer is not just about tackling crime. Often our communities, and in particular our vulnerable communities, fear that they will be victims of crime. That fear can be in terms of what they see day to day in their communities, or from national issues such as alcohol and violence, or international issues such as the threat of terrorism.

### What did the audit tell us?

- Our elderly community don't use local services or public transport after dark.
- Our young people feel that they are perceived as committing crime and ignored as the victims of crime.
- Our Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities do not feel that they have information or support to access services, particularly if they suffer harassment and intimidation.
- Victims of crime do not feel that they have received adequate support, counselling and advice at a local level to get over the trauma of a crime.
- Communities as well as individuals often feel isolated and powerless to tackle issues that they face where they live and where they work.

- Witnesses often feel vulnerable, not only during the process of going to court, but afterwards.
- Our Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community do not have the kind of support that they need to address the intimidation that they often face on a daily basis.
- Our physically disabled community often feel that services are arranged in such a way that they cannot access them or that they do not respond sensitively to their needs.
- We need to ensure that the public are aware that systems are in place for an appropriate multi-agency response to a terrorist incident.

There have been some real successes in Lambeth in terms of reassuring our communities such as:

- The introduction of wardens and Police Community Support Officers.
- Witness Services at court and a dedicated Witness Suite.
- Home security for vulnerable residents.
- The extension of CCTV.
- Regeneration programmes, which include designing out crime.
- Restorative Justice programmes through our Youth Offending Team.

- Counselling services for adults and young people who are both the direct and indirect victims of crime.
- Investment in home security on our estates and for our elderly and vulnerable residents.
- Security for our small businesses through the Raid Control scheme.
- The excellent work of our Neighbourhood Watches in Lambeth.

The Drug and Alcohol Action Team/Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (DAAT/CDRP) wants to place ***making people feel safer*** at the heart of our strategy for the next three years and to build on some of our successes.

We believe that reassurance is about ensuring our communities and those people who live, work, visit and travel in our borough feel safer, more confident and secure. Also that they enjoy the wealth of facilities and cultures that makes Lambeth such a vibrant borough.

We have set out below how we will translate the reassurance agenda through our core themes as well as identifying a number of actions which will be at the heart of making a safer, more confident and secure community.

## Drugs and Alcohol

### What do we mean by reassurance around drugs and alcohol?

There are two clear areas which we need to focus on:

- Addressing drugs and alcohol use and health-related impacts. For example, chronic alcohol use is not criminally recognised and yet cannot be seen as an unrelated issue.
- Reassuring the whole community and reducing fear of harassment and victimisation for all, including drugs and alcohol users.

### What did the audit tell us?

- 30% of Lambeth residents have been offered drugs in last 12 months.
- Residents rated drugs as the biggest problem in Lambeth. Around 60% of residents claimed that drug-dealing (61%) or drug use (59%) were very / fairly serious problems.



**“The drug pushers outside KFC and Coldharbour Lane and also you cannot stand at a bus stop without people coming up to you selling drugs. I don’t have a problem with it, but others can feel intimidated, I can deal with it. I love Brixton for its multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism.”**

*Quote from focus group attendee from the consultation for the Lambeth Crime and Disorder Audit 2004.*



## Violent Crime

### What do we mean by violent crime and reassurance?

Levels of murder and robbery in our borough have fallen in the last two years. Other types of violent crime like Grievous Bodily Harm and minor assault have increased. Our survey of young people told us that 25% of them carry a weapon, including knives, to protect themselves.

Our levels of sexual offences are high and our level of domestic violence abuse is one of the highest in the country.

Certain types of violent crime will only get reported to a family member or a friend.

### What did the audit tell us?

- Violent crime across London has increased.
- It accounts for less than 20% of all recorded crime.
- Domestic Violence and assaults accounted for 50% of violent crime.
- There has been a 2.7% increase in offences against the person in Lambeth (2003-4 – 2002-3).
- There were 11 murders in 2003-4 compared to 15 in 2002-3.

- There has been a 10.6% increase in ABH (242 offences).
- In 2003-4 there were 111 rapes or attempted rapes compared to 107 in 2002-3. Coldharbour ward recorded the highest levels (15 offences).
- GBH offences increase by 28% (352 offences).
- Robbery has decreased by 49% in three years.
- 73% of respondents to our consultation who had experienced a violent offence said it had been carried out by a stranger.
- Only half the victims reported it to the Police.
- Young people feel safe when they carry something to protect themselves.
- Robbery / mugging was commonly experienced by young people. Only 20% of respondents report crime and only 12% of those reported the crime to the Police.
- There is a clear need for closer links with more partner agencies and in particular health providers.
- There is a fear amongst our communities around guns and gangs, especially on our estates.

There is a clear need to:

- Improve community confidence in our Police, Criminal Justice System and public bodies that reporting crime will result in action.
- Develop local community-based victim and witness services, which are accessible and responsive to the needs of the victim.

If we are to reassure our community about violent crime, we have to:

- Ensure that we have the ability to respond in a multi-agency way to support individuals, families or groups who face or have experienced, violence.
- Make it easy to report violence, particularly at a local community level.
- Provide support for victims of violent crime, who often feel most vulnerable, that is sensitive to their needs.
- Make it easier for our communities to know where to get help.
- Make the health and wellbeing of the victim the predominant factor.
- Make sure that those individuals who are caught up in violence have intensive support to change their behaviour.

## Young People

Our Lambeth Community Safety Audit 2004 looked at a range of issues with young people and what made them feel safe and unsafe.

Some key points that clearly emerged were:

- Young people felt that they were not listened to or at times when someone did listen to them no actions were taken.
- That there is a negative view of young people and that they are portrayed as causing crime rather than being the victims of crime.
- That young people are affected by crime and that there is not enough notice taken of young victims.

It is clear from our audit that young people face enormous pressures throughout their early years and in particular through adolescence. As one young person said:

***“Being young in itself is a significant risk factor in Lambeth.”***

### What did our audit tell us?

Of the 336 respondents to our young peoples questionnaire on crime and community safety:

- 188 answered they felt most unsafe because of gangs in the area.
- 184 felt unsafe due to drug dealers in the area.
- 172 felt unsafe because of drug users in the area.

When asked about the sorts of things that made them feel safe:

- Two thirds of the respondents felt safer being in a group.
- One quarter said they carried something to protect themselves.

### Report on young people aged 2–10 years

Young people aged ten years and under were asked to draw pictures depicting what makes them feel safe and unsafe and where they feel safe and unsafe.

- Of the drawings for ‘What/where makes you feel safe’, 78% of young people said that they felt safe at home and 8% said they felt safe with their mums/families.

- 16% of young people drew that they felt unsafe being alone and 15% felt unsafe being on the streets.
- Six focus groups were held with 61 young people aged between five and ten years old and they were asked where they felt safe and unsafe.
- All the young people felt safe at home and with their parents and/or families. The majority of the participants felt safe either in the classroom or at school.
- Many of the young people also mentioned play schemes, adventure playgrounds, youth clubs, after school clubs and the park.
- All the young people said that they felt unsafe on the street / road, being in the dark, alleyways, being around people who were taking drugs, drinking and prostitutes.
- The majority of the young people also mentioned that being alone made them feel unsafe.

## Victims and Witnesses

If we want our communities to take a stand we must make sure that we place the victim or witness at the heart of our community safety agenda.

It is clear from our audit that our communities want to see sensitive, local, community-based support services that cater for their needs.

This is an immense challenge but one that the DAAT/CDRP considers to be the key objective in our reassurance agenda.

It is also one that needs to be extended to various types of crime, including anti social behaviour. There is also clear need for a better integrated multi-agency support service that is responsive and sensitive to the long-term needs of the victims, from the initial report, through to the court process and beyond.

Young people report a lack of confidence in agencies if they report a crime, both in terms of response but also in terms of their own safety and image amongst their peers and community.

Our youth provision and funded programmes, such as Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP), need to identify and support young mentors who can support their peers who are victims of crime.

## What did the audit tell us?

- Young people use gang culture as a means of self protection and to resist peer pressure.
- Young people are the most sceptical group with regards to the effectiveness of statutory agencies.
- They feel that there is insufficient opportunity for them to be part of the solution rather than being seen as the problem of youth crime.
- Between 2003-4, there were 738 young people referred to Victim Support, a decrease of 15% or 127 when compared to 2002-3.
- Young people felt that CCTV did not improve their safety. Although the Police were seen positively in keeping people safe. Young people felt safer in a gang or group.
- Young people feel victimised by stop and search.
- 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).

## Priority Crime

Lambeth has a track record of successes over the past three years in reducing priority crime such as street crime, residential burglary, robbery and motor vehicle crime. But there is still a lot to do to reassure our communities and to help reduce the fear of crime.

There are three key areas for reassurance and priority crime that the DAAT/CDRP will concentrate on:

- 1.** Effective and targeted communication including information on how to keep yourself and your property safe.
- 2.** Better support for the victims of priority crime starting with repeat victims.
- 3.** A more effective Criminal Justice System.

The first two points are covered under the theme headings in this chapter. In addition, effective criminal justice is an essential part of reassuring our community. Bringing people to justice for their criminal behaviour is vital if we are to encourage more victims and witnesses to come forward. It acts as a key deterrent to those who might commit crime. Equally important and often overlooked, is that effective criminal justice actually creates and reinforces moral boundaries and knowing that action will be taken encourages individuals to report crime. For the victims of crime, who choose

to report what has happened to them, reassurance also means regular contact, feedback and support throughout the process, even when that process may not be as swift as they like. Victims of crime regularly report that they feel powerless. Therefore, regular information, contact and feedback would help them address these feelings.

## Communication

Reassurance should be focused on pro-active communications that prevent crisis management. We need to reassure our community through communications that are accessible, easy to read and regularly updated. They also need to be available for people working and visiting the borough, as much as for people living in Lambeth.

We also need to reassure our community in terms of the levels of crime in our borough. Lambeth crime levels have fallen but the fear of crime remains high, particularly at night time and on public transport. Our communications need to include a clear focus on the threat of terrorism, particularly in terms of the wards affected by the Government Security Zone and ensure that there is a co-ordinated partnership response to an incident. Most importantly we need to make sure that those communities who live and work in these areas are aware of our partnership response and what they can do in the event of a terrorist incident.

But the reassurance agenda and communication is not just about being pro-active. The DAAT/CDRP will use the Lambeth Community Safety Strategy 2005-8 to review how the partner agencies present themselves to our communities, particularly where there is a history of mistrust or loss of confidence.

## What did the audit tell us?

The following tables indicate the community response to our face-to-face interviews with regards to reporting crime.

### Why did you not report the crime to the Police?

The police wouldn't be able to do anything	46%
The police wouldn't take the crime seriously/would not be interested	28%
I don't like the police	22%
I was able to sort the problem out myself	19%
Other	19%
I don't think that it was serious enough	14%
It was unlikely that anyone would get caught	11%
Scared of revenge attacks/ reprisals	8%
Couldn't be bothered to report it	6%
Didn't want to attend court	6%
Didn't think the court would do anything/courts too lenient	3%

### Did you report the incident to anyone else?

Family	48%
Friends	46%
No – did not report it to anyone	14%
No – just the Police	14%
No response	12%
Victim Support	3%
Medical staff	2%
Social Services	1%
Teacher/School	1%
Voluntary/Community organisations	1%

*NB: Residents could give more than one answer. Responses were coded from unprompted comments.*