

Feedback on the Peckham and Nunhead Area Action Plan

Background

Peckham and Nunhead is an area of considerable cultural diversity and has within its boundaries some of the largest concentrations of families and individuals from the Black and minority communities who are living below the poverty line. This profile is not likely to change over the next decade as shown by the racial profiles of local primary and secondary schools where in Harris Academy Peckham for example over 90% of children are from a minority background and statistics show that individuals from these groups are more likely to be unemployed. Despite this there is no strategy, or interventionist plan within the Area Plan to deal with it.

Although the council may have a strong commitment to equalities and *“improving access to employment for disadvantaged communities in Southwark by removing barriers,...supporting entrants to the labour market....building skills of Southwark’s workforce...”* current statistics shows that unemployment amongst young people from Black and minority communities has reached an all time high and is spiralling out of control. Unemployment rates for young people continues to rise and for young black men it continues to escalate.

According to the London Poverty Profile produced by the New Policy Institute, *“the [unemployment rate among young people](#) is at its highest level for nearly 20 years (23%) and is still rising. Despite, on average, being better qualified than other young people in the rest of England, young Londoners are more likely to be unemployed.”*

During the year 2000 when work first started on the Peckham and Nunhead Area Action Plan, the UK unemployment rate stood at 5.3% whilst in Southwark it was 12.8%. Unemployment rates amongst the white ethnic groups were 7.8% compared to 17.2% for non white groups. Year on year unemployment has continued to rise standing at over 400,000 across London and to over 120,000 amongst young people who are struggling to cope with the brunt of the recession.

The impact that unemployment has on the lives of individuals and on the lives of families is widely understood but does not come through as a priority in the Area Plan that needs to be addressed, especially as the statistics and recent riots makes clear the extent of the growing problem and feelings of frustration.

When unemployment is looked at by group and by race, the group worst affected are young people from minority groups. Statistics show that 19% of whites 16-24 years are unemployed; this figure



rises to 44% of Londoners from Pakistani background and a staggering 55% for young Black men and rising.

It is therefore imperative to plan to address these emerging issues around youth unemployment as part of the Peckham and Nunhead Area Action Plan in terms of both the physical infrastructure and in terms of the intervention programmes needed in Southwark if the plan is to adequately plan to develop a fairer community for all in a meaningful way

Infrastructural Plans for Young People

Over the past 15 years Starlight Music Academy has worked with 1000s of young people facing a range of complex challenges, including young people of colour. The main purpose of our work is to improve the quality of life for vulnerable groups of young people, to help them realise their skills, talents and worth and divert away from gangs and crime. Because we know that a child without a dream and who feels worthless is potentially a walking destruction to society and individuals within the community. The constant knockbacks and frustrations caused by unemployment and low economic prospects should not be under estimated.

The London Poverty Profile highlighted that "Poor children in London are more likely to [lack everyday items](#) than their counterparts outside London, with 60% of children in low-income families unable to afford a week's holiday away from home."

Starlight also wants to begin discussions with the Jamaican High Commission about youth exchange schemes.

Last year the country experienced the worst riots since the 1980s; young people vented out and released their pent up feelings of frustrations and anger. If society thinks these feelings have suddenly gone away then they are very wrong. Enterprise, Arts, and sports Hubs which are run by organisations that understand these groups, such as Starlight Music Academy, can go a long way towards effectively engaging unemployed minority groups

Families, particularly those from minority communities continue to be living in poverty. In 2002 Southwark had the fifth highest rate of benefit recipiency in London. High levels of benefit recipiency levels amongst minority groups have remained but masked now being masked by the influx of affluent homebuyers snapping up the 1000s of new properties being built in Southwark.

As well as planning to build new properties to allow affluent wage earners wanting to move from the suburbs in to inner city areas to be closer to jobs in the City, the Peckham and Nunhead Area Plan also needs to plan an infrastructure that addresses the needs of its existing residents and the children of its rate payers. The plan should include within its infrastructure plan Youth Hubs, Enterprise Hubs, Sports Centres, Arts and Cultural Centres, an evening and night economy to bring jobs in to the area to positively engage the tens of thousands of young people with low job prospects

The current Peckham and Nunhead area plan falls short of addressing these growing challenges facing Peckham and Nunhead and needs to be addressed within the document if it is to be representative, fair and relevant to the whole of Southwark's community.

Starlight's Request

On behalf of the needs of young people in Peckham and Nunhead and towards creating a fairer community where all sections of the community are catered for within the Plan, it is proposed that:

- 1 The needs of young people are more adequately addressed within the area plan to address the growing trend of high unemployment levels amongst this group
- 2 The needs of young Black people are specifically addressed in light of statistics which evidence trends of high unemployment increasing and long term unemployment growing amongst this group
- 3 Starlight Music Academy is included as an Arts and Cultural Hub within the plan. Its 15 years experience of working with young people in Southwark places it at the forefront of addressing the needs experienced by young people and it has the skills needed to effectively work with this group.
- 4 The site of the old Wooddean that formally provided 316 council homes and which under the development is planned to provide 360 new private homes (page 173) should also include an Arts and Cultural Centre facilities therefore 'Required Land use' include the classification 'Class D' to allow for the facilities.
- 5 Any consideration for additional housing on the former Wooddeen site over and above the 360 new homes planned, for example the new 15 story building (page 173 of the Peckham and Nunhead Area Plan) should include a high propensity of one bed affordable social housing for young sofa surfer homeless group .
- 6 The site of the former Acorn Housing office is designated at 'Class D' to allow the Notting hill Developers to develop this building for community use under S106
- 7 The Peckham Cinema is maintained and that the cinema multi story car park (page 165) which has the potential to include leisure and entertainment facilities on two floors above the cinema to create a leisure complex in Peckham similar to Hippodrome Leicester Square comprising of bars, gaming, high end restaurant, lounge, entertainment, cabaret theatre, potentially bringing in businesses, tourists as well as an evening and night economy and much needed jobs for young people in Peckham.
- 8 The former Nunhead Nursery proposal for a new community centre should include plans for an adjoining Youth Enterprise Hub that allows access and use by young people who are the largest unemployed group in need of employment in Southwark.

We need to keep a grip on the young people we are trying to work with, we need a stable location, these successive moves experienced by Starlight and lack of opportunities for young people in the Plan are potentially destructive storing up future problems for the area. It also hampers our efforts of building the employability and social skills of our young people in Peckham and Nunhead.

Source

Peckham and Nunhead Area Plan

London Poverty Profile Facts report – New Policy Institute and Trust for London

Southwark Employment Strategy 2006