

Consultation and Participation

Camden Children's Fund



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Camden Children's Fund Consultation and Participation

A Vision for 2004-2006

The consultation and participation service, as provided through the Children's Consultation and Participation Officer in the next two years, hopes to achieve the following:

- Provide ongoing support, training, guidance and resources to all other Children's Fund projects around consultation and involvement of children, young people and their families. The nature of the service means that it is reaching a wide range of hard-to-reach children including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, refugees, homeless children and children with a wide range of disabilities. The service aims to work with all projects to develop a strategy for improving user involvement while also being able to provide evidence of changed service delivery as a direct result.
- Promote and develop consultation and participation through a variety of activities that will not only build upon project's capabilities but will also empower those involved to take responsibility and control of situations themselves. This will include providing training for staff, children and young people on advisory groups, evaluation and establishing feedback mechanisms e.g. newsletter, website, leaflets.
- Ensure that those within all Children's Fund projects are involved in consultation and participation work at a local and national level through establishing links across Camden, with other Children's Funds and with government departments and initiatives.
- The work of the service anticipates being sustained within individual projects as staff, children, young people and their families are provided with the tools and skills to take responsibility and control of services that are genuinely inclusive and accessible.

In addition to providing a lead on and co-ordination of consultation and participation across the Fund the main feature of the service will be to ensure that within all Children's Fund projects support and guidance are provided that actively involve children, young people and their families as service users.

These aims are based upon the objectives as set out in the Service Specification and Action Plan 2004-2006. They have been informed by Children's Fund Guidance on Consultation and Participation and best practise.

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Introduction

In August 2003, I arrived as the maternity cover for the post of Children's Consultation and Participation Officer within Camden Children's Fund. I was amazed and slightly taken aback by the range of projects supported through the fund, sensing the variation in the involvement of children and their families within individual projects.

Below is a reflective summary of the last nine months in my role as Children's Consultation & Participation Officer within Camden Children's Fund. The post provides a service to all projects within the Fund as well as a service within its own right, working across Projects to develop and promote the involvement of children, young people and their families. I hope that this report will not only give an overview of the service's development since August 2003 but also to consider what has worked well, what problems were encountered and what could be improved upon in the future.

Background

Camden Children's Fund, set up in 2001 as part of central government's strategy to tackle child poverty and social exclusion, is committed to giving children aged 5 to 13-year-olds across Camden a real say in the development of children's fund projects, to ensure that the services we provide are responsive and meet the real needs of children living in Camden.

Seven core Projects are currently supported through Camden Children's Fund. In addition to the core Projects, fifteen Street Crime Initiative Projects in 2003 – 04 were also funded. These Projects provided diversionary activities designed to combat crime and anti-social behaviour among identified young people 8 –13 year olds.

The philosophy underpinning the Fund is that children and their families need to be fully involved in service design, delivery and evaluation in order to achieve a genuinely inclusive programme which is attractive and accessible to hard to reach groups.

There are many benefits to both services and participants of consulting and involving services users. These include:

- Better services
- Social inclusion and citizenship
- Personal and social education and development

Camden Children's Fund has adopted a set of core principles to underpin and inform the development of strategies and projects, of which the following reflects the importance of children, young people and their families involvement:

- Promote the participation of local families, children and young people in the design and working of the programme.

Some projects were very involved in activities across the Fund that promoted and developed participation. Other projects were more involved in developing structures within their project to actively promote service user's involvement. Some projects were involving children, young people and their families in evaluation but not so much the delivery of services provided. Some projects had only just started or were not even up and running yet.

Prior to my arrival, projects had been involved in key activities that had an impact across the Fund. Firstly, children and young people had been involved in creating an identity for Camden Children's Fund through developing a logo. Secondly, a group of young people had participated in the recruitment of maternity cover for the Children's Consultation & Participation Officer post.

Within individual projects, only two had set up and were running a children's advisory group to ensure involvement at a delivery level. Of those, one had also established parents on the project's steering group. Other projects had established parent groups only.

With this in mind, I began to consider how to reach children, young people and their families with the help of the Camden Children's Fund Programme Manager in order to encourage their involvement in future activities across the Fund.

Children and young people

With such a diverse range of projects aimed at providing services for those at risk of social exclusion and child poverty, we are reaching a wider range of hard-to-reach children including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, refugees, homeless children and children with a wide range of physical and learning needs.

Children are engaged in consultation and participation activities through a variety of mechanisms:

- Referrals: self; organisation; parents
- Established groups e.g. children's advisory groups
- Questionnaires

Across the Fund

All Camden Children's Fund projects have been increasing the involvement of children in the development of the projects. In many cases, this has been linked to project evaluations and in several cases, the development and support of children's advisory groups. In addition Camden wide consultation and participation activities have been organised such as the magazine project, designing a boardgame project, celebration event and involvement of the recruitment of Children's Consultation and Participation Officer maternity cover.

Celebration Event

With the end of the first phase of the Children's Fund programme fast approaching, the uncertainty about future funding ever present and the end of the Street Crime Initiative projects the Fund decided to organise an event in the spring of 2004 to celebrate past achievements and highlight future project work. The initial idea was for professionals, children, young people and their families would be invited to a celebration involving many of the projects.

Children and young people were asked if and how they would like to be involved in the future Celebration event, whether they wanted to help plan the event, perform at the event, develop publicity or take photographs. They were asked if they would like to take part in other activities such as a newsletter, children's forum and possible future events. Parents were also asked if they would like to be involved in the Celebration event.

500 questionnaires were distributed across the Fund through Project Leaders and Coordinators in December 2003. Children, young people and their families were asked to respond by the middle of January 2004 to ensure that enough time would be made available to plan and deliver activities according to their preferred choices.

Children and Young People

36 children and young people responded to the questionnaire, aged between 7 and 14 years old. They were from a wide range of backgrounds and came from the following Street Crime Initiative and current Children's Fund projects:

- Primary Schools Project
- Our House
- Fusion
- Westcroft Transitions Project
- Girls R Us Peer Research Project

Of those who responded, all said they would like to be involved in the event but in different ways.

Activity	Total number
Be a member of a planning group	9
Perform something for the event	24
Take photographs at the event	12
Make a poster for the event	22

The majority of children and young people favoured taking part in the performance and making a poster. Being a member of a planning group was not very popular. As a result, we decided to plan a range of activities providing creative opportunities for children and young people to get involved in the event.

We commissioned Cloth of Gold, an organisation that creates huge silkscreen banners with children and young people to design and produce banners that could be used as the basis for a poster design. They ran a one day workshop in a local Playcentre, which was attended by 9 children and young people. On the day they explored the theme "I care about..." through initial drawings before transferring their ideas onto the cloth banners using silkscreen printing techniques.

Unclassified Mime, a drama/theatre company were involved in working with 19 children and young people to create short drama pieces just using mime and focusing on the idea of having a "Perfect World". There were three small groups, each who told a different story based on a shared concern: there would be no stealing in their perfect world. The groups used their imagination to explore this theme, from having a world made of chocolate to being superheroes and saving the world from the thieves.

Overall, 19 children were involved in the range of activities offered and took part in the actual celebration event., which was attended by over 120 people, who were largely children and their families. All the participants thought the activities were good and they enjoyed everything from the pizza and venue to working with Robert, the drama tutor. At the end of the workshops, when asked what they liked the most popular response was "Everything!".



Unclassified drama group

Parents

Parents were also invited to take part in the celebration event and, we were able to meet with two parents, which was very helpful. We discussed the event, in particular menu choices and the parents talked about their experiences of being part of the Fund's projects. One parent felt that the services her family had received had enabled them to be more involved in activities both within and outside of school.

Reflecting upon the celebration event I think it was a huge success based on the involvement of children and young people and their feedback. I would definitely do this again, (despite all the Saturdays), however if I had to do something differently, I would consider having the activities extended over a longer period of time because it was a very short project. In addition, we didn't have an evaluation format for the final event and in June I will be contacting the participants to ask

them what they thought of the event, if anything could have been better and whether it would encourage them to take part in future events and activities.

Where's your Head at?

A board game to promote and consider the importance of children having a say in the decision making process.

It was decided prior to my arrival that it would be useful to produce a board game that highlights the importance of involving children and young people in decision making processes. Universal Board Games, a company who works with children and young people to create unique board games based on particular themes, were commissioned to do a one day workshop with a group of young people aged 8 to 14 years old.

The aim of the workshop was to produce a game, decided by the group that could be played within their age range and by adults, raising awareness of how to have a say in situations that affect children and young people.

In October 2003, a total of 9 participants took part on the day aged between 10 and 14 years old. They were from the Our House, Somali Supplementary Schools and Girls R Us Peer Research projects. They spent the day playing games, talking about their concerns around having a say and considering how they are able to make decisions particularly at school. As a result of their experiences and ideas, a game was designed around making things happen at school through negotiations with other pupils and teachers. All the participants thought the day had either been good or very good. It was also my first opportunity to meet some of the children and young people from different projects.

Universal Board Games were responsible for producing the final game, which was then piloted with two of the workshop participants. The feedback was very positive and each project that took part received their own copy of the game.

Currently, the game is available to all projects as well as after school clubs, playcentres and schools. Myself and one of the workshop participants can come to a setting and play the game with a group of young people to consider how to have a say and to get involved in making decisions.

Girls R Us Peer Research Project and Street Crime Initiative

This project was my first priority when I arrived in post and I was able to work with 19 researchers aged between 9 and 14 years old, exploring the current use of services and future needs of girls living in the Somers Town and St. Pancras area. The team devised a questionnaire, which was completed by 60 girls of the same age. Key recommendations from the project were more sports and dance activities for girls only. We are currently asking the researchers how they would like to follow up the project and we will provide an update in July 2004. For further information a report and a leaflet are available.

The projects funded through Camden Street Crime Initiative made a significant contribution to the safety, well being and enjoyment of nearly 5000 children and young people aged 5 -13 during the summer of 2003. Many of the children who

took part in activities are at risk of social exclusion, some are particularly at risk of anti social behaviour. The funding for these projects is no longer available and they will definitely be missed this summer.

All the projects were asked to write an evaluative report on the services provided, based on a format devised by myself and the Fund's Programme Manager. We asked projects to consider the following:

- How did the children and young people benefit from the project?
- What feedback did you receive from the children and young people (e.g. comments, quotes, evaluation summaries, anecdotal evidence)?
- What have you learnt through the project delivery and the children and young people's feedback?

All the reports were collated into a final overview report, which will hopefully leave a record of all the hard work and positive opportunities that the Initiative provided. The report is available from Olivia Vincenti, Camden Children's Fund Programme Manager.

Children's Advisory Groups

Fusion and Our House, the two projects who have established a children's advisory group since 2002 have continued to receive support and guidance. This has involved attending and organising the meetings, providing new activities and supporting the children to take part in other events across Camden e.g. Fusion Clubnight

Fusion Children's Advisory Group have been involved in making decisions about project merchandise, future activities, evaluating their project using video diaries and attending conferences on inclusive play. The Group also voted unanimously on raising the age limit from 14 to 15 years old, which has now been put in place. The group has also taken part in consultations across Camden including Camden's Children and Young People's Strategy in November 2003.

There are currently 12 members, who meet either half-termly or termly. The group has recently recruited 5 new members and we are planning to provide an induction training programme for the group in autumn 2004.

Our House Children's Advisory Group has been involved in staff recruitment to the project, choosing future play activities, and consultation on planned events e.g. Our House Winter Party 2003. The advisory group consists of members aged between 5 and 12. There are currently 10 members who meet termly. The group has recently attracted younger members while other members have become too old. The aim for those members who are going to leave is to celebrate their transition and to encourage mentoring and support roles. Consultation on whether there should be two separate age groups is also planned to address a wide age range and differing needs.

Children's Fund Newsletter

Camden Children's Fund has just published its first newsletter, which comprises two sections: one aimed at adults including information about projects, contributions from parents and up and coming events; the other section is aimed at children and young people, and is overseen by a young editorial team.

Initially, we asked children and young people in the December questionnaire if they would like to get involved in producing a newsletter as well as asking the children's advisory groups in particular projects. Although the majority of those asked wanted to take part in the Celebration event, ten said they would like to be part of a newsletter team.

This newsletter team, made up of children and young people from five projects aged between 7 and 14 years old, worked together over a month to develop their own newsletter titled *Camden Fever*. The team decided upon the content and layout of the newsletter in short workshops in February and March 2004. The group then spent two sessions at a local media centre to design and produce the final version. The group contributed articles on film, recent project events attended, experiences of projects, hairstyles, jokes and interviews.

All the participants enjoyed the workshops but they suggested that there should be more time given to learning ICT skills to design the newsletter. For the next issue we will be offering a programme of fun learning activities based on different aspects of writing and producing a newsletter over summer 2004.



***Camden Fever News team
March 2004***

Megazine Project

Megazine is a Camden-wide schools project to encourage and develop reportage, interview, review, opinion and debate by and for Camden children. The project aims to engage children of different ethnic, cultural and religious groups to express themselves as part of a community,

motivate boys and other often disaffected groups to participate and provide new life experiences by creating links with media, professionals, artists, cultural agencies and business. The Megazine project is run during school time, with involvement of teaching staff and editorial visits.

Camden Children's Fund and Megazine worked in partnership to specifically target out of school activities and projects that involve Camden school children. All projects were invited to take part in a series of children's workshops, where ideas, types of writing and support were given for participants to contribute to the project.

Primary Schools Project, Somali Supplementary Schools Project, Our House and Fusion all took part in the workshops over Easter and summer 2004. The idea was for each project to have a designated page with about five articles to be published in the full colour Summer edition of Megazine.

The projects referred children to the workshops and although the feedback was positive, there was a general disappointment with the level of commitment from the Megazine team. This was compounded when not all the work created was included in the summer edition. Furthermore, the projects did not receive their designated page as it was felt this would not reflect the general ethos of the publication.

Camden wide and national consultations

Camden Children's Fund projects have taken part in wider local consultations. Fusion and Somali Supplementary Schools Project took part in a Camden wide consultation on their Children and Young People Strategy in October 2003. They participated in a day long conference event facilitated by young people held at the Town Hall. Their contributions were then fed into the final strategy and they will be asked to take part in the launch in November 2004.

The new Children, Young People and Families Directorate (CYPFD) in the DfES commissioned a study of genuinely participatory practice with children and young people in 2003. The research was undertaken by the National Children's Bureau and PK Research Consultancy and involved case studies from 29 organisations. The research team were supported throughout by a group of Young Advisors and Young Researchers.

Camden Play Service, in particular the Fusion and Rollercoasters project, took part in the study. Young people, staff and the Children's Consultation & Participation Officer were all interviewed and were involved in the conference launch in December 2003.

The report Building a Culture of Participation is now available and is accompanied by a handbook that aims to stimulate thinking, offer useful ideas and encourage organisations to develop a more participatory culture.

Fusion Children's Advisory Group have also been involved in consultations on accessible transport including the planned route for Plus Bus, a scheme across

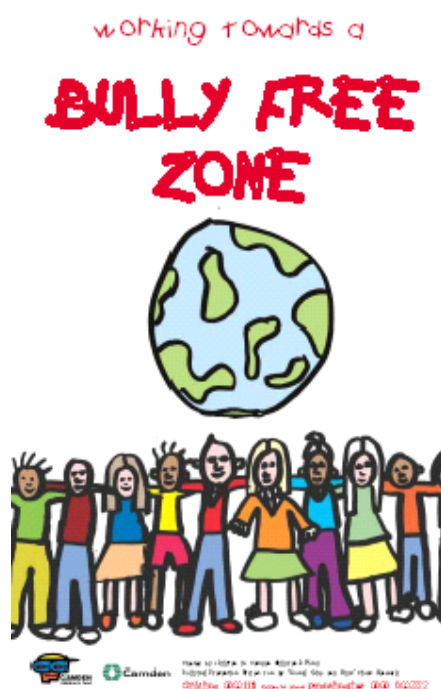
Camden and Islington which aims to provide a fixed, free route for those with mobility or learning difficulties.

Individual Projects

For an update on consultation and participation achievements within individual projects please see Table 1.

Bullying Prevention Project

Research commissioned by Camden Children's Fund in 2002 by Robert Frew found that bullying affected a significant number of children living in the Regents, Park, Somers Town and Kings Cross/Brunswick area. As a result of this research Camden Children's Fund commissioned 4 Children and Young Voice to undertake further consultation through a programme of music, art and drama activities, to raise awareness about bullying out of school, and develop materials and a training programme to take the campaign forward between January and March 2004.



Over 200 children aged 5 -13 took part in a range of activities that enabled them to talk about bullying, and how they thought it could be prevented. Rapping was very popular and as a result several raps were recorded for a CD to be distributed along with posters and postcards designed by the young people.

The feedback from the children and young people who were involved in the project was overwhelmingly positive, with 96% indicating that the activities had helped them to think about bullying.

A series of recommendations were made by the young people including asking street warders to patrol parks and estates on different routes each day, more drama activities about bullying, a bully centre where people being bullied can go, and putting information in newspapers and magazines. Perhaps more importantly, the young people want to see a sustained, consistent approach to preventing bullying across Camden and involving everyone.

The project developed a report and a leaflet aimed at young people. A group of young people, based at one of the locations where activities took place, were consulted on the leaflet's final design and content.

To raise awareness across Camden, the posters were displayed in bus stop shelters and packs including the CD and postcards were distributed to playcentres and projects across the borough.

The work is now being taken forward within the Restorative Justice project.

For more information a full report is available from Olivia Vincenti, Camden Children's Fund Programme Manager.

Evaluation

All the projects have involved children, young people and their families in evaluation processes, using a variety of methods e.g. diaries, discussion groups, questionnaires. It is very important that all projects encourage services users to give feedback continuously and that this is used as the basis for planning future service delivery.

Fusion Clubnight uses a short evaluative questionnaire for children to complete at the end of the evening. The responses have been overwhelmingly positive and ensured the planning and delivery of future club nights. It is hoped that future evaluations will become more interactive as more activities are provided that support the development of new skills and interests. This would include learning how to Dj, compere and being more involved in the planning of the event.

Somali Supplementary Schools Survey has just completed its first annual satisfaction survey. All children attending schools supported by the project were asked to give their views on preferred subjects, the quality of tutors, the environment, future support and how they feel about their school overall. I am currently in the process of completing a report based on the results, which will be ready mid-August 2004. The results will then be disseminated to children, parents and staff within the project.

Primary Schools Project is developing an assessment tool for those working primarily in multi-disciplinary teams. The IMPROVE matrix, based on the seven Children's Fund objectives, hopes to assess children referred to the team taking into account issues surrounding the family, community and local provision. The tool aims to identify strengths and weaknesses, consider the most appropriate support services and provide a measure of improvement before and after referral.

Working with the project and the Programme Manager, we established key indicators for the key objective *Valued and sustained involvement of all groups* to ensure that consultation and participation are embedded in the assessment framework.

The IMPROVE matrix will be piloted in the autumn term 2004 and more information can be provided by contacting the project directly.

Parents

In developing parents involvement in Camden Children's Fund there has been a range of activities from questionnaires and information sessions to representation on steering groups (Our House) and contributions to Camden Children's Fund newsletter.

Findings

There has definitely been a lot going on both across the fund and within individual projects to promote and develop children, young people and their families' participation. This has been really positive and encouraging to see how hard the Fund works to develop user involvement at all stages. I have been so impressed by the commitment of the Partnership, Project Leaders, staff and most importantly, the children, young people and their families to the work of the Fund.

While wanting to value the hard work achieved so far, I think it is also useful to highlight some of the challenges or barriers that have appeared over the last 9 months. This is crucial to developing future action plans and objectives, which all projects are currently doing. Furthermore, there is much to be learnt from what hasn't worked so well and what could be done differently in the future.

Challenges

On reflection, I am aware that I have to improve my own monitoring of children's involvement, participatory activities and most importantly, changes made as a result of their involvement on an ongoing basis.

I have thoroughly enjoyed getting to know the projects yet I still feel there are projects that are perhaps not making use of the service the consultation & participation project offers. It is important that this service continues to offer support and maintain contact with the projects as they progress over the next year. Projects vary in their undertaking of participatory processes so as a result, some are more advanced in establishing meaningful participation than others. Where projects have established and developed participatory processes, some are still based more on one off activity rather than embedded within the organisation.

It seems that current means of communication to provide opportunities for children and young people to access projects and activities have sometimes proved difficult and time consuming. This will hopefully be improved through a co-ordinated approach to publicity and communication with the establishment of the newsletter and website.

Monitoring the feedback from children and young people's involvement across the Fund and the benefits gained/improvements required has begun but not enough work has been done.

Future objectives

As a result of this report, I consider the following objectives to be crucial to working towards the challenges faced and continue the achievements across the Fund in the next year:

- **To ensure that there is recorded evidence (verbal, written, observation) of the views of children, young people and their families influencing changes within and across all projects in relation to service planning, delivery and evaluation.**
- **To ensure that children and young people are involved in the local evaluation process to ensure that their views and experiences are included and considered as part of the overall Camden Children's Fund evaluation.**
- **To establish and promote Children's Advisory Group training for all project staff, children and young people.**
- **To develop and support the involvement of children, young people and their families in producing the Camden Children's Fund Newsletter**
- **To develop and support Somali Supplementary Schools Project in producing a children's satisfaction survey and report**

Action plans detailing these objectives have been submitted to the Programme Manager.

Effective and sustained work around consultation and participation requires ongoing support, innovation and strong communication structures. I hope that the objectives above go some way to enable the projects and the Fund overall to provide opportunities for children, young people and their families to take more ownership and control of situations that affect their daily lives.

TABLE 1
Consultation & Participation Update
May 2004

All Camden Children's Fund projects have been increasing the involvement of children in the development of the projects. In many cases, this has been linked to project evaluations and in several cases, the development and support of children's advisory groups. In addition Camden wide consultation and participation activities have been organised such as the magazine project, designing a boardgame project, celebration event and involvement of the recruitment of Children's Consultation and Participation Officer maternity cover.

This update summarises some of the key achievements projects have made in involving children.

Activities across all Camden Children's Fund projects:

- Magazine
- Where's Your Head At? Boardgame project
- Camden Children's Fund Newsletter
- Celebration Event April 2004
- Evaluation

Project	Progress and Achievements to date	Future Actions
Primary Schools Project	Informal consultation taking place between project participants and staff Beginning to establish more formal structures to link with evaluation strategy Evaluation report	To publish details of how project participants have been involved in the development of different aspects of the project To take part in external local evaluation

	<p>Participated in Megazine project</p> <p>Participated in Celebration Event activities</p> <p>Participated in Camden Children's Fund Newsletter</p>	
Our House	<p>Have an active children's advisory group</p> <p>Have involved a member of the advisory group in recruitment of staff</p> <p>A range of methods have been used to gain children's opinions e.g. diaries during trips</p> <p>Participated in Megazine project</p> <p>Participated in Celebration Event activities</p> <p>Participated in Camden Children's Fund Newsletter</p>	<p>To develop further the children's advisory group to ensure playing an active role.</p> <p>To consider have two groups to facilitate different age groups</p>
Peace of Mind	<p>Have focused their involvement with parents</p> <p>Has begun a girls group based in a secondary school</p>	<p>Consult with children who have been part of the group to gain views and suggestions for the future</p> <p>To take part in Camden Children's Fund Newsletter</p>
Fusion	<p>Activities featured in Listening to Change report from NCB for the Children's and Young People's Unit</p>	<p>Developing a process for graduates and new membership for the advisory group that acknowledges commitment and</p>

	<p>Consultation sessions and survey are main methods used to involve children</p> <p>Involved in evaluating Fusion Club Night</p> <p>Well established children's advisory group</p> <p>Participated in Megazine</p> <p>Participated in Camden Children's Fund Newsletter</p> <p>Participated in Celebration Event activities</p> <p>Involved in consultation on Camden's Children and Young People Strategy</p>	<p>contributions</p> <p>Opportunity for existing members to train/mentor others</p> <p>Increase peer consultation</p>
<p>Somali Supplementary Schools Project</p>	<p>Involved in recruitment panel for children's consultation & participation officer maternity cover</p> <p>Participated in Megazine</p> <p>Participated in Celebration Event</p> <p>Involved in a satisfaction survey for all supplementary schools</p> <p>Involved in consultation on Camden's Children and Young People Strategy</p>	<p>Supporting project to do analysis, reporting and action planning.</p> <p>Develop children's advisory group with representatives from each supplementary school.</p>

Youth Crime Initiative	This initiative has ended but support and development of the Girls R Us Peer Research Project has continued.	Develop Girls R Us Peer Research Project Recommendations
Restorative Justice Project	Training for children has not yet begun within this project	
Junior Youth Inclusion Project	Has an active young people's advisory group Involved in activity planning	Develop and support young people's advisory group
Bullying Prevention Project	Over 200 children involved and consulted through a programme of music, art and drama activities in February 2004 to talk about bullying and how they thought it could be prevented Posters and postcards designed by young people were displayed at all bus stops in Camden to promote and raise awareness of bullying prevention A CD was developed of all the songs and raps made by the children and young people based on their concerns about bullying	This project has been completed but some of the activities and a follow up on the consultation will be picked up through the Restorative Justice project