

# Hackney Wick Through Young Eyes



HACKNEY WICK  
YOUTH VOICE



place really good competitions and space around the area.

89 out of ten

because there is some gangs. I gave it an eight because there are lots of children and parks. Plus there are lots of places which has alot space where you can play.

This park is also very sun because there is a climbing wall. I will like to have more slides in this park.

There are also a lot of gangs.

This park also is sometimes has a fun fare very often which is also why I like coming here. Plus there is alot of violence.

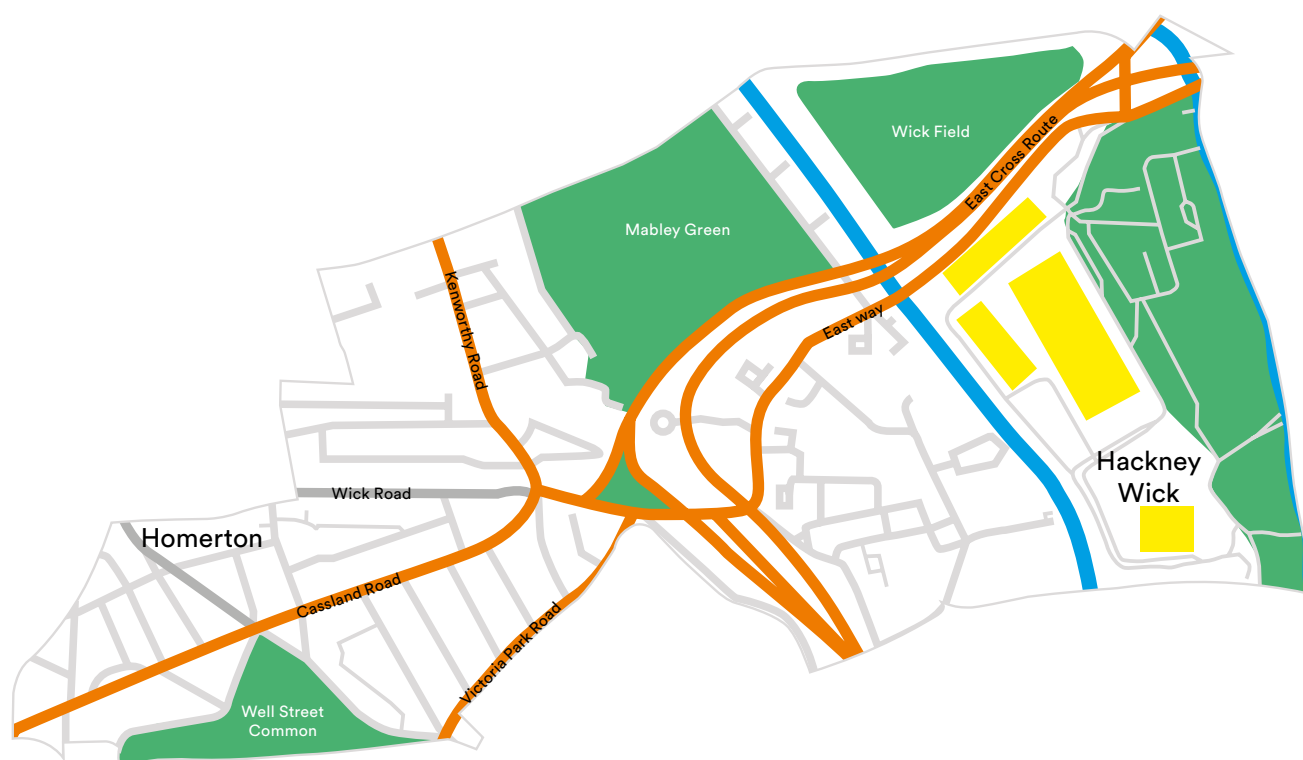
use parts any where I love

What local young people value, the problems they face, and what they want to change



# Hackney Wick Through Young Eyes:

What local young people value, the problems they face, and what they want to change



January 2018

Hackney Wick Youth Voice is a project run by Hackney Quest and funded by Wick Award through the National Lottery "Big Local" scheme.



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[hackneyquest.org.uk](http://hackneyquest.org.uk)

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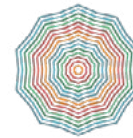


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**WICK AWARD**

**Local Trust** | **Big Local**



**LOTTERY FUNDED**

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# Executive Summary

This report focuses on Hackney Wick's young people: their thoughts, concerns, and ideas. It is a product of the Hackney Wick Youth Voice project, an initiative run by Hackney Quest and funded by Wick Award, through the National Lottery "Big Local" scheme. The goal of the project, and of this report, is to amplify the voices of local young people. We hope that this report can help young people to be recognised as the vitally important local stakeholders that they are, and that the concerns they have raised can be taken seriously and addressed.

Between January and July 2017 we ran interviews, focus groups, workshops, surveys and events, engaging over 400 young people aged between 8 and 20, as well as a few parents. This report presents their outlook on Hackney Wick in their words: their views and opinions, joys and worries.

## Main findings

Hackney Wick was given an average rating of **6.1 out of 10** as a place to live for young people. This is obviously a crude measure, but indicates some ambivalence towards the area from young people: whilst some gave nines or tens, plenty also gave twos or threes.

**There is much in the area which is valued and appreciated by young people:**

- They generally love its **parks, playgrounds and neighbourhood sports cages**. The immediate proximity of places to play or hang out was an important factor in this.
- They spoke highly of its **youth centres** and the different **community projects** they are able to get involved in.
- Many suggested that the area has a **neighbourly quality** and a **strong community feeling** which they love, and which is enriched by Wick's **diversity**.

**Young people face significant problems and challenges in Hackney Wick:**

- Prime among them are issues with **crime, violence, and gangs**. Gangs were almost ubiquitous in discussions with young people of all ages, and clearly cause substantial fear and anxiety.
- Many young people suggested there **isn't enough to do** in the area, particularly east of the A12.
- Concerns about **deprivation**, including **housing**,

were common even among the youngest respondents – young people are acutely aware of the poverty which affects much of the area.

- Young people felt they are too often **stereotyped**, particularly as trouble-makers or as "bad." Some suggested that the media plays a role in this, and that the police seem to pre-judge young people.
- Many older young people (16+) complained about a **lack of work opportunities**. Some suggested they think **it's easier to make money illegally than legally** for many local young people.
- Young people don't always feel that their **wellbeing** or **mental health** is sufficiently prioritised, particularly in schools, which they can find overly pressurising.

**Young people have differing views on the changes that Hackney Wick is going through:**

- Many spoke positively about **regeneration, new shops and restaurants, the Olympic Park**, and the improvements to **Hackney's reputation**.
- Negative comments were more common, however, particularly regarding the **declining affordability** of the area, their **sense of belonging being undermined**, and being **disempowered** by a process of change that they do not feel involved in.
- Interestingly, some young people focused on **what has not changed**, such as deprivation, poor housing, and the disempowerment of young people. There was a suggestion that **much of the change in the area is superficial**, and that it **mostly just benefits wealthier people**.

**Young people presented many different ideas about what they wanted to see in the area:**

- Among many, there was a focus on addressing the problems they face – they wanted **improved safety, solutions to gang issues, increased community togetherness, and more opportunities**.
- When discussing what they think would help local young people, a large number mentioned the benefits of **trips and residentials**, as well as **new or improved activities and facilities**.
- Some spoke about **new youth centres**, and had specific ideas for the type of youth centre.

# Navigating this report

The directly quoted words of young people make up a substantial proportion of this report: we want to draw attention to individual young people's thoughts, as well as highlighting trends. Where relevant and useful, we have also included statistics and data from other sources. The report is comprised of seven parts:

## [Introduction \(Page 9\)](#)

This contains an introduction to the Hackney Wick Youth Voice team, and then a demographic overview of Hackney Wick and its young people. This is followed by a brief summary of Wick Award's previous youth research, and an outline of the methodology used to gather the evidence presented in this report, including images of maps and tables completed by young people.

## [Chapter 1: How do local young people rate their area? \(Page 21\)](#)

A very brief look at the overall ratings for Hackney Wick given by young people.

## [Chapter 2: What do young people value most in Hackney Wick? \(Page 24\)](#)

This chapter focuses on the positive opinions expressed by young people about features of Hackney Wick such as local parks, playgrounds, sports cages, youth centres, and community projects. This chapter also includes young people's reflections on community spirit in the area, and the ways in which neighbours help one another.

## [Chapter 3: What problems do young people face in Hackney Wick? \(Page 33\)](#)

This chapter focuses on the main problems identified by the young people we engaged in our research. The largest section addresses the issue of gangs (p. 39-44), covering a range of questions relating to the problem which were discussed by our respondents.

## [Chapter 4: How is the area changing for young people? \(Page 53\)](#)

Hackney Wick is a rapidly changing area, and this was frequently discussed by young people. This chapter focuses on their opinions about various changes that they have noticed, split into positive and negative experiences. It also includes a discussion of continuity – what doesn't seem to be changing in the area.

## [Chapter 5: What do young people want to see in the area? \(Page 61\)](#)

This chapter contains young people's thoughts on what should change in Hackney Wick, focused firstly on the major problems which they would like to see addressed, before outlining some of the new things they would like to have in the area.

## [Recommendations for policy-makers \(Page 70\)](#)

The report concludes by offering eight key recommendations for policy-makers based on the findings of our research, including specific examples for each recommendation.

[Between each chapter we have included some of the output produced by young people as part of the research. To see more of the work produced by young people, visit the research tumblr page: \[hwyvresearch.tumblr.com\]\(http://hwyvresearch.tumblr.com\)](#)

[You can download a digital copy of this report \(or an abridged version\) on the Hackney Wick Youth Voice project webpage:](#)

[bit.do/hackneywickyv](http://bit.do/hackneywickyv)

[This webpage also contains more information about the project, including how you can get involved.](#)

[We'd be very happy to hear from anyone who has comments on this report, or ideas for what could be done to help local young people. Please contact Luke by email or phone: \[luke@hackneyquest.org.uk\]\(mailto:luke@hackneyquest.org.uk\) 020 8533 5480](#)



Hackney Wick Youth Voice Town Hall event, July 2017: 40 local schoolchildren quizzed the local MP, Meg Hillier, and presented their ideas to the Mayor of Hackney, Philip Glanville.



Members of the winning team celebrate their victory at the Hackney Wick Community Cup football tournament, April 2017. (The trophy was handmade by a local potter.)



# Introduction

## The Hackney Wick Youth Voice team

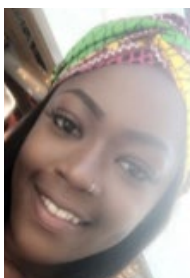
The Hackney Wick Youth Voice project is led by Luke, a Hackney Quest youth worker, and two young people: Renee and Jordan.



LUKE, 26

I lived in Hackney Wick for all of my youth – I was born in Homerton Hospital and lived just off Kenworthy Road until I went to University at 18. I loved growing up in the area, especially enjoying the local parks, but I've always been concerned by its inequality and

the issues affecting its young people. I'm passionate about engaging with and empowering local young people, and hope that this report helps to amplify their ideas and concerns.



RENEE, 20

Growing up in Hackney has not been bad, but it probably could have been better. It has changed rapidly and I personally think it has been for the best. Not ignoring all the gangs and killings, which need addressing, I think recent changes have brought a lot of the

community together, as there are loads of shops and markets that have opened which allows people from different areas to come and be a part of the Hackney community.

The most interesting thing about talking to young people in Hackney Wick has been hearing their ideas and what they think about the area they live in. Especially the young people under 10, it's amazing to hear how they feel because a lot of them have amazing ideas and want to see change in Hackney Wick as much as everyone else.

The best thing about living in Hackney Wick for young people is seeing the change that has occurred over the last couple years. The young people now have a bigger and better park in Stratford which was built a couple years ago when the Olympics was taking place.

If I was in charge and could make three changes to Hackney Wick, I would open up a brand new adventure playground for the young people. I would also open up a youth club for the young people which could take them on residential trips. I would also open up a homework club where the young people can socialise with others and get to know new people.



JORDAN, 16

The community was a lot more together in Hackney Wick when I was younger than it is now. This may be because of how diverse the area is now and the rise in prejudice and discrimination towards young and older people. Also, there wasn't much to do in

Hackney when I was growing up, other than the local youth clubs, which provided enjoyable trips and residential.

A lot of young people mention gangs and litter on the road as being problems that should be fixed – even under 10s. The mention of gangs was interesting for me because when I was under 10 I wasn't aware of gangs. I just saw everyone as equal and normal (a world with no gangs). So being involved in this project has made me more aware that the younger generation is a lot more advanced and know a lot more than I did when I was their age.

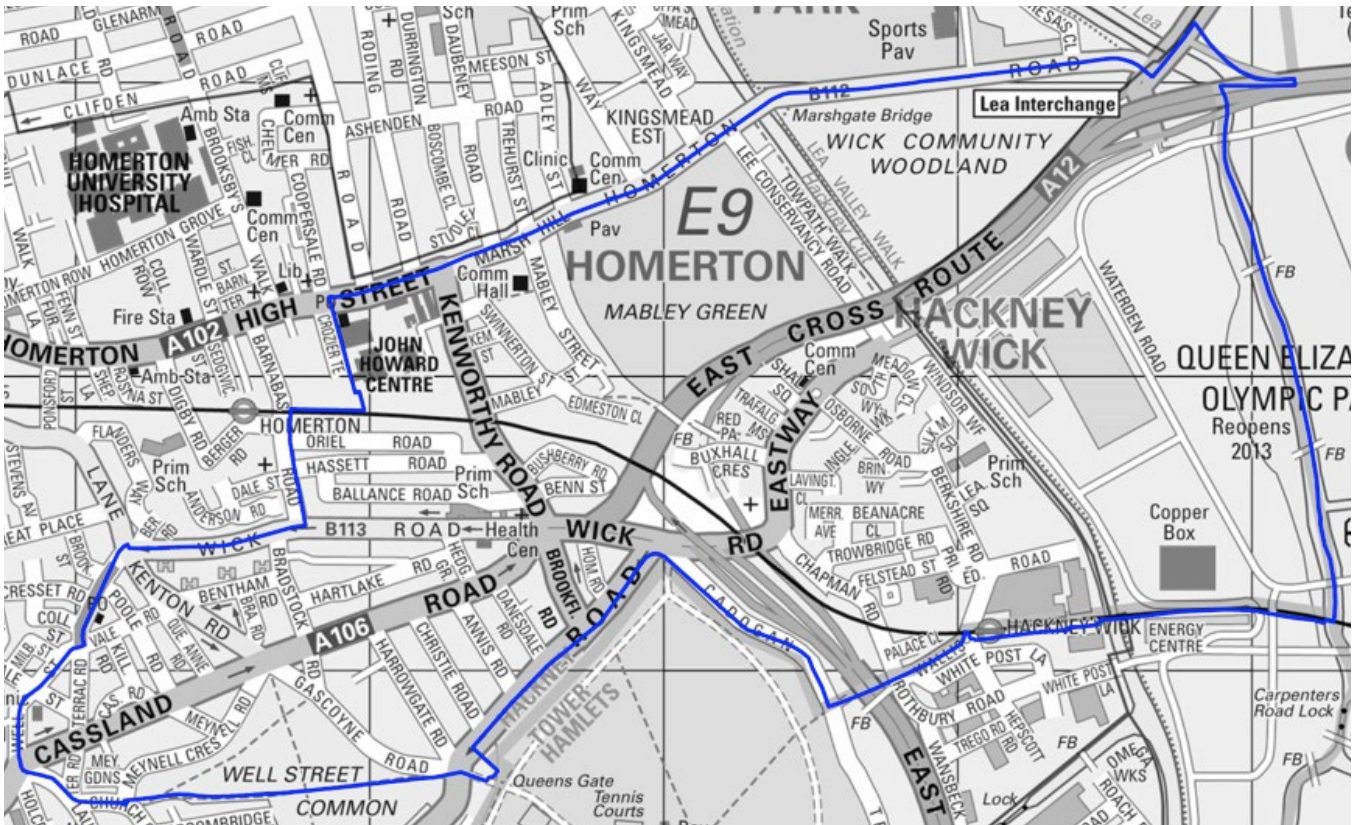
To be honest, there isn't really much to do for young people in Hackney Wick other than the local park. The youth clubs are probably the best things about Hackney Wick because it keeps young people off the streets and takes them on trips, providing them with experiences they wouldn't have had if they didn't go to the youth club.

If I was in charge of Hackney Wick, I would change:

- More jobs available in local businesses for young people.
- More communal events for the community to come together.
- Create a youth club, in which we will go on trips and residential and also do educational courses, which will help us in the future.

# Hackney Wick and its young people: an overview



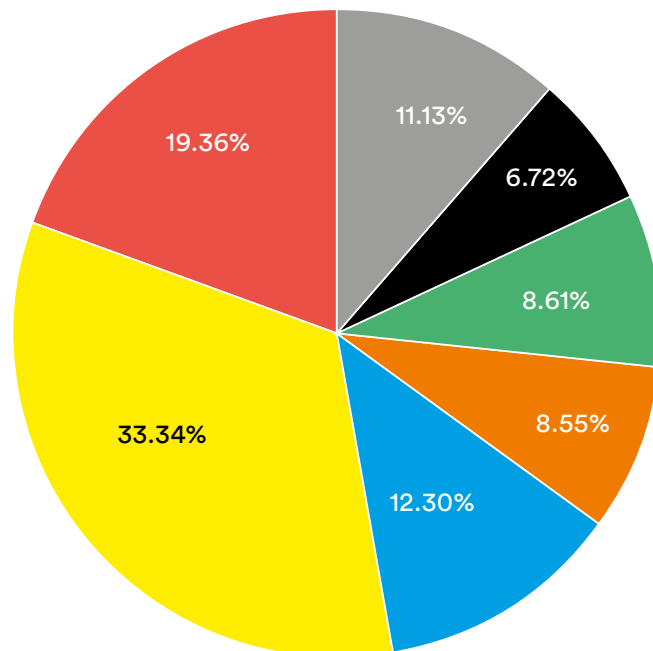


The blue outline indicates the area which constitutes the ward of Hackney Wick.

# A significant proportion of Hackney Wick's population is made up of young people.

Ages in Hackney Wick

- 0-7
- 8-12
- 13-19
- 20-25
- 26-30
- 31-50
- 51+

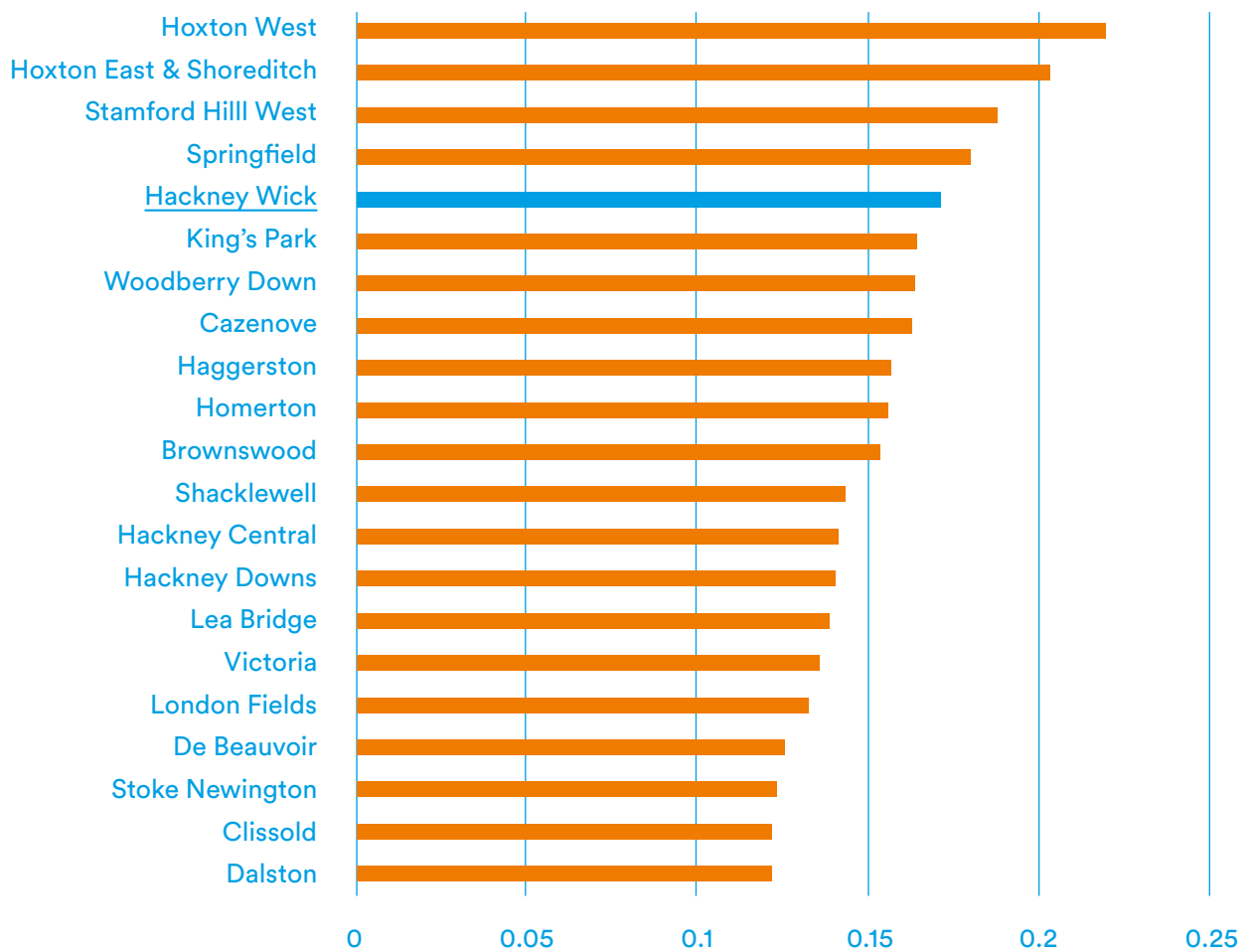


**Nearly half (47%) the population of Hackney Wick is 30 or under**  
**Over a third (35%) is 25 or under**  
**Over a quarter (26%) is 19 or under**  
**Almost a fifth (18%) is 12 or under**

Data used for the chart above comes from ONS population estimates produced for mid-2015.  
Source: [www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/wardlevelmidyearpopulationestimatesexperimental](http://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/wardlevelmidyearpopulationestimatesexperimental) [last accessed 20/08/2017]

Hackney Wick has one of the highest proportions of teenagers and young adults of all the Hackney wards, as can be seen in the chart below.

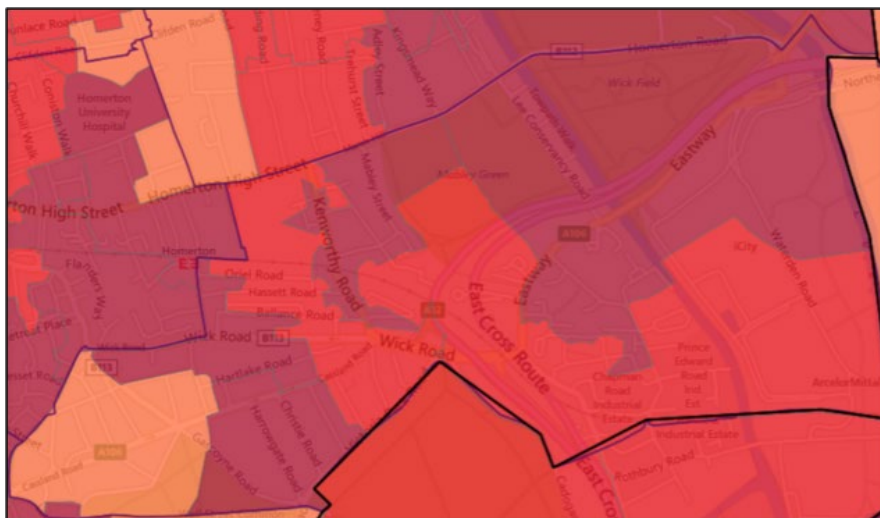
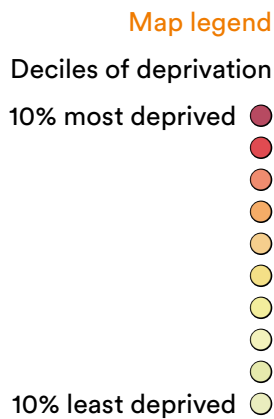
### Proportion of population who are 13-25



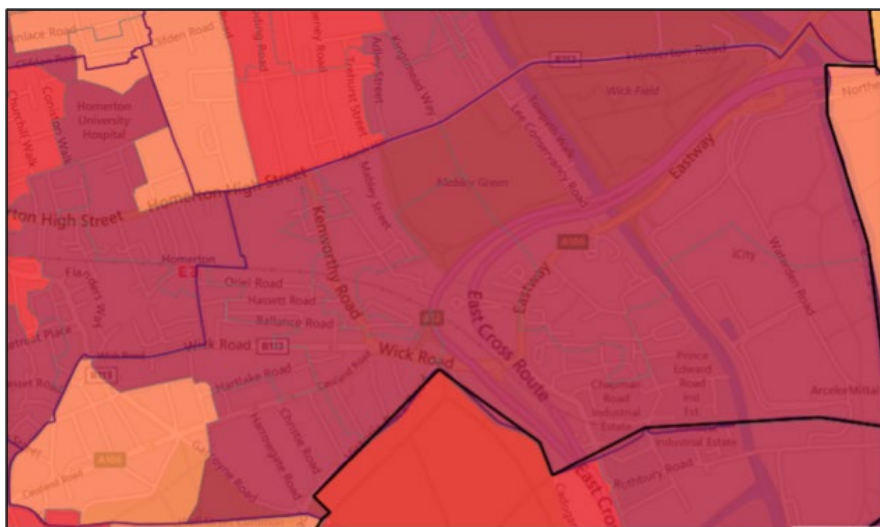
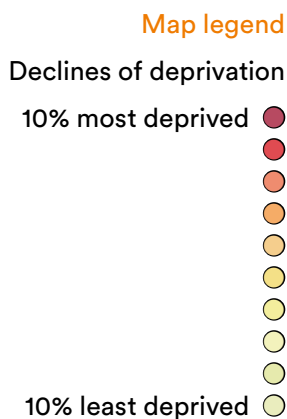
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Source: [www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/wardlevelmidyearpopulationestimatesexperimental](http://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/wardlevelmidyearpopulationestimatesexperimental) [last accessed 20/08/2017]

# Hackney Wick is among the most deprived areas in the country.

The first map below shows that most of Hackney Wick was in the bottom 10% or 20% of areas in the country in terms of Multiple Deprivation in 2015 (a measure which includes unemployment, crime, and other indicators.)



The map below is coded according to one specific measure: income deprivation affecting children.



Source for both maps: <http://dclgapps.communities.gov.uk/imd/idmap.html> [last accessed 20/08/2017]

According to End Child Poverty data from 2015,  
Wick has among the highest rates of child poverty in Hackney:

| Ward (using 2013 boundaries) | % of children in poverty before housing costs | % of children in poverty after housing costs |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| Haggerston                   | 27.75%  | 43.09%                                       |
| Chatham                      | 27.43%  | 42.52%                                       |
| King's Park                  | 26.86%  | 42.10%                                       |
| Wick                         | 26.46%  | 41.61%                                       |
| De Beauvoir                  | 26.45%  | 41.28%                                       |
| Dalston                      | 26.18%  | 40.88%                                       |
| Hackney Central              | 26.16%  | 40.78%                                       |
| Hackney Downs                | 25.88%  | 40.26%                                       |
| Hoxton                       | 25.32%  | 40.17%                                       |
| Queensbridge                 | 24.77%  | 38.94%                                       |
| Brownswood                   | 24.03%  | 37.92%                                       |
| Leabridge                    | 24.27%  | 37.87%                                       |
| Victoria                     | 23.85%  | 37.50%                                       |
| Hackney                      | 23.72%  | 37.06%                                       |
| Stoke Newington Central      | 22.59%  | 35.17%                                       |
| Clissold                     | 22.20%  | 34.43%                                       |
| Springfield                  | 20.51%  | 31.95%                                       |
| Cazenove                     | 20.67%  | 31.70%                                       |
| New River                    | 18.69%  | 29.25%                                       |
| Lordship                     | 18.69%  | 29.16%                                       |

Source: [http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/images/2016/London\\_LA\\_and\\_ward\\_data.xlsx](http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/images/2016/London_LA_and_ward_data.xlsx) [last accessed 20/08/2017]

# Wick Award's previous youth research

Wick Award undertook an extensive community research project in Hackney Wick in 2015-16, and produced a report in March 2016. Part of this research looked at the concerns and needs of local young people. Young people were consulted in local schools, youth clubs, and in public places.

In Berger Primary School and Mossborne Victoria Park Secondary School they asked groups of young people to rate the local area, producing the results below.

## How much do you like living in this area?

Berger mean average = 7.18

| Scale                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9   | 10  |
|----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|-----|
| Numbers of responses | 2 | 1 | – | – | 5 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 6.5 | 7.5 |

Mossbourne mean average = 7.4

| Scale                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8   | 9   | 10 |
|----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|-----|----|
| Numbers of responses | – | – | – | – | 1 | – | 5 | 3.5 | 1.5 | –  |



The main concerns that young people raised in the 2015-16 research were:

- Crime – especially in relation to gangs, anti-social behaviour and drugs;
- The local environment – pollution, litter and green space;
- Deprivation – housing, homelessness and poverty;
- The need for more youth provision – especially jobs/training and physical/social activities for those over 11.

Many young people said that there was a need for more facilities, both indoor and outdoor, especially those which would allow for more sports activities in the area. When Mossbourne Victoria Park students were asked about the types of youth facilities that they'd like to see in the area, the most popular ideas were:

- Teenage play centre
- Football space
- Cycling events
- Laser tag/paint ball
- Gym for young people (most popular answer)

Community activities such as local sports competitions or a food festival/market were also suggested, and the students were conscious that activities would have to be free or low cost. Local youth clubs needing more support was mentioned as well.

Cabrini, the 18-year-old youth researcher who worked on the project, summarised their findings:

“Speaking to teenagers on the streets we got an overwhelming sense of despondence – almost all teens we spoke to stated gangs or crime as the thing they felt had to be improved within the area... Children were also very aware of littering and Anti-Social Behaviour such as smoking and dog foul, many kids complained about the smells on estates and drugs in their area – they were showing clear indications of exposure but also knowledge that it was wrong. Things that the young people did like were very limited... Green spaces and a good social life were the highlights of the area, although many did stress the need for more outdoor facilities and indoor hangout spaces...”

The young people were also very aware of those less fortunate – many children proposed swap shops and charities for those who were poor with one girl speaking solely about mental health and disability awareness and providing help for them.”

Many of these themes were also discussed by the young people we engaged in our research, which we undertook on a larger scale. The following section contains an overview of where and how we engaged with local young people.

## Speaking to teenagers on the streets we got an overwhelming sense of despondence

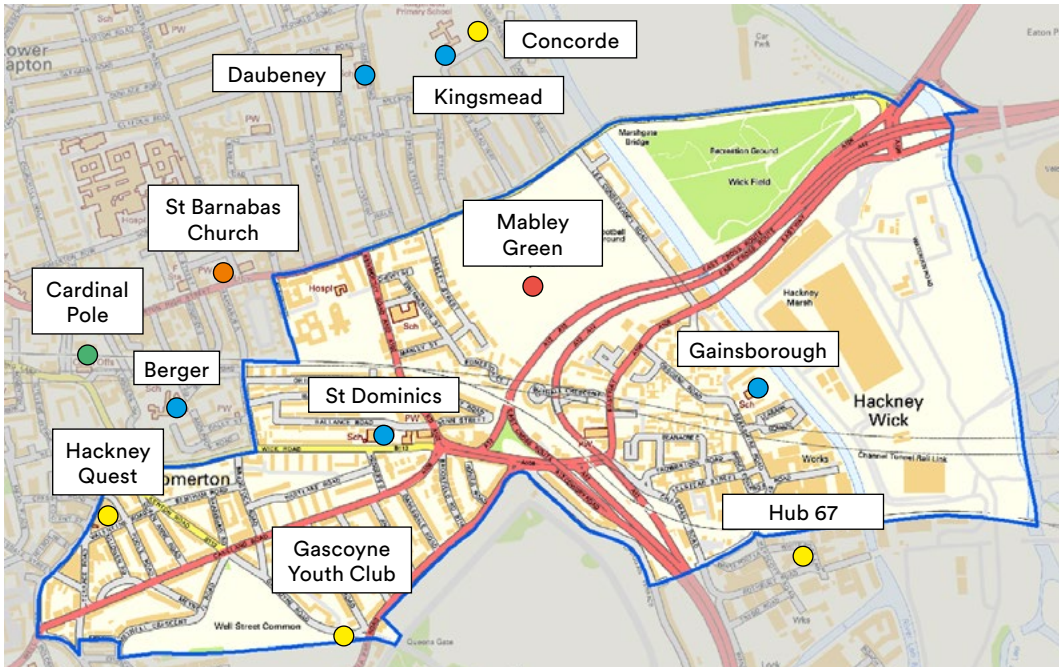
(Cabrini, 18, youth researcher)

# Who did we engage with and how did we get their ideas?

We used a variety of methods to gain insight into the perspectives and ideas of over 400 young people from Hackney Wick or immediately neighbouring areas, during January – July 2017. The table below shows how we engaged young people and parents in different settings.

| Form of Engagement   | Settings  | Number engaged                    |
|--|---|-----------------------------------|
| <p>Workshops</p> <p>Tailored to age group, including activities such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Map annotation</i></li> <li>• <i>Individual writing activities</i></li> <li>• <i>Group brainstorming</i></li> <li>• <i>Debates</i></li> </ul> | <p>Gainsborough School<br/>           Berger School<br/>           Daubeney School<br/>           St Dominics School<br/>           Kingsmead School<br/>           Cardinal Pole School<br/>           Hub67 Youth Club<br/>           Hackney Quest<br/>           Morningside &amp; Gascoyne Youth Clubs<br/>           St Barnabas Church Youth Group</p> | <p>295 YP (Young People)</p>      |
| <p>Structured &amp; semi-structured surveys</p> <p><i>Self-completed or notes made based on discussion</i></p>   | <p>Hub67 Book-swap event<br/>           Hub67 Bigga Fish youth session<br/>           Hackney Quest<br/>           Concorde Youth Centre<br/>           Gascoyne TRA<br/>           “Boroughs United” Event at Hackney Empire<br/>           Online</p>   | <p>51 YP, 11 parents</p>          |
| <p>Focus groups &amp; interviews</p> <p><i>Recorded &amp; transcribed</i></p>  | <p>Hackney Quest<br/>           Hub67 (walking tour with YP)<br/>           Buxhall Crescent</p>  | <p>20 YP, 1 parent</p>            |
| <p>Attendees at events</p>   | <p>Hackney Wick Community Cup (surveyed attendees)</p> <p>Town Hall event (included workshop &amp; presentations)</p>   | <p>c. 100-150 YP</p> <p>40 YP</p> |

The map below shows the settings in which we engaged young people. They all have a significant proportion of attendees from the Hackney Wick ward and its immediate vicinity.



Below is a small selection of the types of output that our workshops with young people produced.

MY AREA IS CALLED: Nisbet house MY POSTCODE IS: E95SA

| ☺ THINGS I LIKE ABOUT MY AREA ☺                     | ☹ THINGS I DON'T LIKE ABOUT MY AREA ☹                                  | THINGS THAT I WOULD CHANGE IF I WAS THE BOSS OF MY AREA                                       |
|---|--|---|
| I like my park just beneath my flat.                | I don't like the amount of boys that are around my flat.               | I would like to change the amount of people that smoke and it <sup>is not</sup> good for you. |
| I like my neighbours because they are kind.         | I don't like the cigaretts that people leave around and don't pickup.  | I would like to change the littering and grassed.   |
| I like the amount of trees that are near me.        | I don't like the litter that is on the floor.                          | I would like to change how much help there is for the elderly.                                |
| I like the view of my nearby train station.         | I don't like the equpt equipment in the park.                          | I would like to change how many gangs come.   |
| I like the amount of how much it's peaceful, quiet. | I don't like that sometimes the cars go the wrong way, it's dangerous. | I would like to change the people stealing bins.  |
| I like the shop keepers in my nearby shop.          | I don't like my neighbors sometimes because they make noise.           | I would like to change how much people are driving dangerous.                                 |
| I like the amount of people that come to my flat.   | I don't like when sometimes random people come to your flat.           | I would like to change the amount of pollution around the flat.                               |

"Like/Dislike/Change" activity sheet



# 1

## How do local young people rate their area?

As part of the workshops and the surveys, we asked young people to rate their area out of 10 for what it is like to live there as a young person. We collected 103 of these ratings overall – 56 from secondary-age young people, 33 from primary-age children, 3 from 19 year-olds, and 11 from parents.

This chapter reveals the average and median ratings, and includes a selection of reasons given by young people and parents for the ratings they gave. Their reasons allude to many of the key themes explored in this report.

**The mean average rating  
for Hackney Wick  
was 6.1 out of 10**

**The median was 6**

This is of course a very crude, simple measure, but it gives an indication of the general feeling among this sample about the area – reasonably positive, but with significant room for improvement. Many young people rated the area 9 or 10 out of 10, but plenty also gave it a 1 or 2.

Both when giving an overall rating on the map of Hackney Wick, and when completing our survey, many young people (and parents) gave explanations for their ratings. Below is a selection of these explanations, which allude to the factors affecting young people's lives.

**From the maps:**

- 8 Because there is some gangs. I gave it an eight because there are lots of children and parks. Plus there are lots of places which has a lot of space where you can play. I also gave it an eight because there is a lot of violence
- 6 Because there is too much violence and there's good playgrounds
- 2 There is too much violence
- 8 I like that there are loads of parks and space and I don't like all the littering and too many gangs
- 2 Because it is not a good place for young people to grow up in and there's usually bad things happening and violence

**From the survey:**

- 3 Because the community is poor (Female, aged 16)
- 3 There are a lot of gangs and people you know could be in danger (Female, 11)
- 5 There are bad people and noisy people but there is decent safety (Male, 12)
- 7 I like the people and Concorde Youth Centre (Female, 15)
- 7 because it is not perfect and there's too many gangs (Male, 15)
- 2 Litter, gangs, noise, too much violence causing Hackney to be tagged as a "bad area" (Female, 12)
- 6 Like the area overall, don't like the estate we live in. Lots of housing issues and anti-social behaviour. (Female, Parent)
- 1 Been here all my life, it's boring. (Female, 19)
- 8 Hackney Wick is a great part of Hackney to live in. I think we have good transport links with shopping not to far to get to. Culturally mixed and thanks to the Olympics, there has been a lot that we have benefited from. (Female, Parent)
- 9 Because of the football pitch and the youth around me (Male, 12)

These explanations touch upon many of the things which will be explored further in this report: the value of local parks and youth clubs, for instance, and the effects on young people of violence, gangs, deprivation, and the local environment.



## 2

# What do young people value most in Hackney Wick?

Talking with young people in Hackney Wick, you get the sense that many of them feel lucky to live where they do, and that they appreciate what the area offers them.

This section describes what young people like most about Hackney Wick: the places they most enjoy going to, the facilities they benefit from most frequently, and the characteristics of the area that make them happiest.



The wordcloud below was generated by inputting everything that every young person wrote when filling in the “Things I like in my area” column of the activity sheet, as well as all of the answers young people gave in workshops to questions such as ‘what are the best things about your area?’ In all, this includes roughly 200 children and young people, aged between 8 and 19. The bigger the word, the more often it was mentioned.



From this wordcloud – as well as the surveys, maps, interviews and focus groups – it seems that there were four main things which young people most often spoke about positively:

- 2.1 Parks and other play facilities;**
- 2.2 Youth centres and community projects;**
- 2.3 Neighbours and community feeling;**
- 2.4 Other local assets, such as Homerton Hospital and Homerton Library.**





The value of parks also came through in the surveys, and particularly strongly in our interviews:

If you go to the right hand side of Victoria Park, that part is very very very very nice (19 year-old female)

Mabley, Hackney Marshes and that, that's one of my favourite areas. Cos I'm sporty, so that's important to me (13 year-old male)

[When asked what she likes about her area] Olympic park. I like the space, I like the greenery, I like that it's cleaner, there's not so much garbage and that. And I like it in the dark, I like seeing the view... you can see all the lights from Stratford...it looks so pretty (16 year-old female)

As is evident in the word cloud at the beginning of this chapter, sports cages were very frequently mentioned by young people too. Particular stress was placed on the value of having a cage near to their house – comments for 'Things I like about my area' included "it has a cage", "the football cage is huge and close", "I like the big field and cage outside my house".

Homerton Grove Adventure Playground is just outside the Hackney Wick local authority area, near to Homerton Hospital. But it was very clear that children and young people from Wick prized it highly. On their maps, young people wrote comments such as:

This playground is amazing and fun

I love this playground

I like it because I play there

A great place to play

Adventure is a great place for children to go play and to be active

I love to play around in this playground. It is fun.

Amazing place for children to get along with other children

A parent we interviewed was particularly enthusiastic about the adventure playground:

Everything is moving so fast that people are forgetting the value of good old-fashioned things like a tree house. There's a thing at Homerton, called Adventure, by the hospital. It's one of the most popular kids' attractions in Hackney. All they do is go there and get f\*\*\*ing dirty, in mud, and swings, and tyres, and just be kids! When [son] was the age of 6 – 12, 13, even 14, they used to go there, swing, get dirty, drop, every kid's been there!

Many of the comments that young people made underlined the importance of local play facilities being well-equipped and maintained. When writing or talking about what they didn't like in their area, young people included things such as:

Park equipment is taken away

I don't like the park because they took the zip wire

I would change the park and make it more updated as in putting swings and football cage

No goals in the cage

Poo in the cage

Football cages in bad condition

Young people's concern about the maintenance of their local facilities again helps to highlight the extent to which they think of them as key features of their area and value them highly.

**All they do is go there and get f\*\*\*ing dirty, in mud, and swings, and tyres, and just be kids!**

(Parent, speaking about Homerton Adventure Playground)

## 2.2 Youth centres and community projects

Youth centres and youth clubs were very frequently mentioned as among the best things about the local area – during workshops, in the surveys, and in interviews and focus groups. All of the individual centres and clubs within or close to Hackney Wick were mentioned positively by young people: Concorde, Hackney Quest, Hub67, Pedro, Gascoyne youth club, Morningside youth club, and Frampton Park youth club all received praise. Comments included talk of fun, events, and also the role that youth centres play encouraging positive behaviour:

I really like Concorde because it's welcoming all ages (comment on activity sheet)

Get to run around in Hub67 (Female 8 year-old surveyed, when asked about the best things in Wick)

Accessible events like the bookswap at Hub67 (male parent, when asked the same question)

Gascoyne youth club is good cos they try to stop the gangs (verbal comment during Year 6 workshop)

A lot of young people in my area enjoy going to Concorde Youth Centre. I believe it takes them off of the streets. (Female 15 year-old surveyed)

The value of youth provision and community projects also emerged in interviews and focus groups:

*What is the best thing about your area?*

The amount of youth clubs around it, there's a lot of youth clubs around it. Also, it's very sociable and like, there's a lot of places to go to.

*What do you mean by sociable?*

There's a lot of youth clubs, and then also there's a lot of therapists, or mentors (13 year-old male)

*What's the best thing about the area you live in?*

The best thing about the area we live in I think would be so many community projects.

*Like what?*

**The best thing about the area we live in I think would be so many community projects.**

(11 year-old female)

Like Hackney Quest has projects and like...you're doing one now. And some cafes on Well Street are trying to do some projects as well, like postcards and things. (11 year-old female)

If not for Hackney Quest...I wouldn't have done anything, no voluntary work, I wouldn't have got that Level 2 leadership qualification, I wouldn't have been part of the Uganda group... (16 year-old female)

It was clear from the young people that they value the opportunities, support and friendship that they get from youth centres. Especially for young people who find school pressurising – as will be discussed later – the more informal atmosphere of youth centres can be invaluable.

Community centres and community halls were also mentioned by young people, often in relation to the value of neighbours and the community more broadly – the focus of the next section.

## 2.3 Neighbours and community feeling

# We have people from all over the world

(14 year-old female)

One respondent to our survey, a 19 year-old female who gave her area an overall score of 9 out of 10, said:

My neighbours and community is what makes me happy and consider the place to be likeable. Also I have lived in my area for 19 years, basically since I was born and have had no issues or desire to move out.

Similar sentiments were often expressed by the young people we engaged with – as illustrated by the fact that the words “neighbours” and “neighbour” were both among the words most frequently used when they wrote about what they liked in the area. Positive comments about neighbours on activity sheets often centred on kindness:

All my neighbours are kind and they play outside with me

I really love the neighbours because they are always very nice and whenever I see them in the morning I always greet them and they greet me back

My neighbours are really nice people

I love my neighbours. They are super sweet and kind. Also they aren't harmful.

I like that the people in my block are very neighbourly and kind

Many of the comments about neighbourliness came from young people living on estates, who seem to benefit from living in close proximity to friendly and supportive people. (Clearly not all young people have had positive experiences of this proximity – as will be discussed later!)

One 10 year-old we spoke to was particularly enthusiastic about the community feeling she notices in the area:

One of the good things is the way that people combine... they unite. They do things together, they combine, it's like everyone here becomes one person... When my mum goes out, she could be going like Tesco's, people around her will be like “Hi, hi, how are you? Take care darling!” It's like they're bonding in some weird way, but it's actually really special.

Some young people mentioned on their activity sheets the buildings in their community which help bring people together:

I like the community centre because if there is a party and you don't know them they will allow you to come

In my area, I have a community hall where we discuss what we can do to improve it

The feature of the local community which was mentioned positively most frequently, aside from neighbourliness, was diversity. In focus groups and workshops, young people often identified diversity as something they treasure about their area. This came through strongly in the survey responses, too:

There are massive positives of the area, e.g. diversity and multiculturalism (Female parent)

Hackney Wick is a great part of Hackney to live in... Culturally mixed and thanks to the Olympics, there has been a lot that we have benefited from. (Male parent)

I feel like in my area we have a range of different colours and ethnicity. We have people from all over the world so we get different smells and looks which really brightens the place. (14 year-old female, who rated the area 10/10)

When speaking about changes in the area, some young people spoke about an increase of diversity in terms of lifestyles – different people coming to the area bringing new tastes with them. New vegan cafes, for instance, prompted different viewpoints, as will be discussed when we explore young people's thoughts and opinions on the ways in which Hackney Wick is changing.

## 2.4 Other local assets – hospital, library, stations, shops

The map annotation activity and the interviews we conducted gave us the opportunity to find out from young people which places in the area count as assets to them. Parks, play facilities and youth centres came up most often, but young people recognised the value of other local places too, and gave clear reasons for their appreciation.

Homerton Hospital, for instance, received plenty of positive comments on the maps. As well as lots of young people pointing out that they were born there, they wrote about kind staff and the role the hospital plays getting people better. The wordcloud for their comments on the hospital looks like this:



Homerton Library, round the corner from the hospital, also received praise:

I like the Homerton Library. They have good books there. Yeah they have amazing books (11 year-old female, interview)

I like the library because it is quiet and it is a good place to do your homework (Primary student on activity sheet)

Local stations Hackney Wick and Homerton were included on the maps, and (despite some negative comments about litter and smell!) were generally appreciated, especially for helping young people get to Stratford and to go on trips:

I go here to go to Stratford

I always go here for family trips on train

Helps me get to Kew Gardens

Gets me to Stratford. It's a good thing.

One young person also wrote “trains on time all the time”, which will delight London Overground executives, but might surprise commuters!

Local shops, lastly, were often written about positively on the activity sheets. As well as convenience, young people seem to particularly appreciate friendly staff and cheap prices:

I like the shops because the owners are kind

I also like the shop keepers they are always up for conversation even when they are having a bad day

Shopkeepers are kind

The shop because stuff is cheap

Chicken and chips shops they are very cheap

The shops because they are cheap

The corner shop across the road is very nice because the things in it aren't expensive





# 3

## What problems do young people face in Hackney Wick?

Despite the many positives of the area, Hackney Wick isn't always an easy place to live for young people. During our research, it was striking how many young people spoke about problems which have a significant impact on their quality of life: their safety, their happiness, and their future prospects.

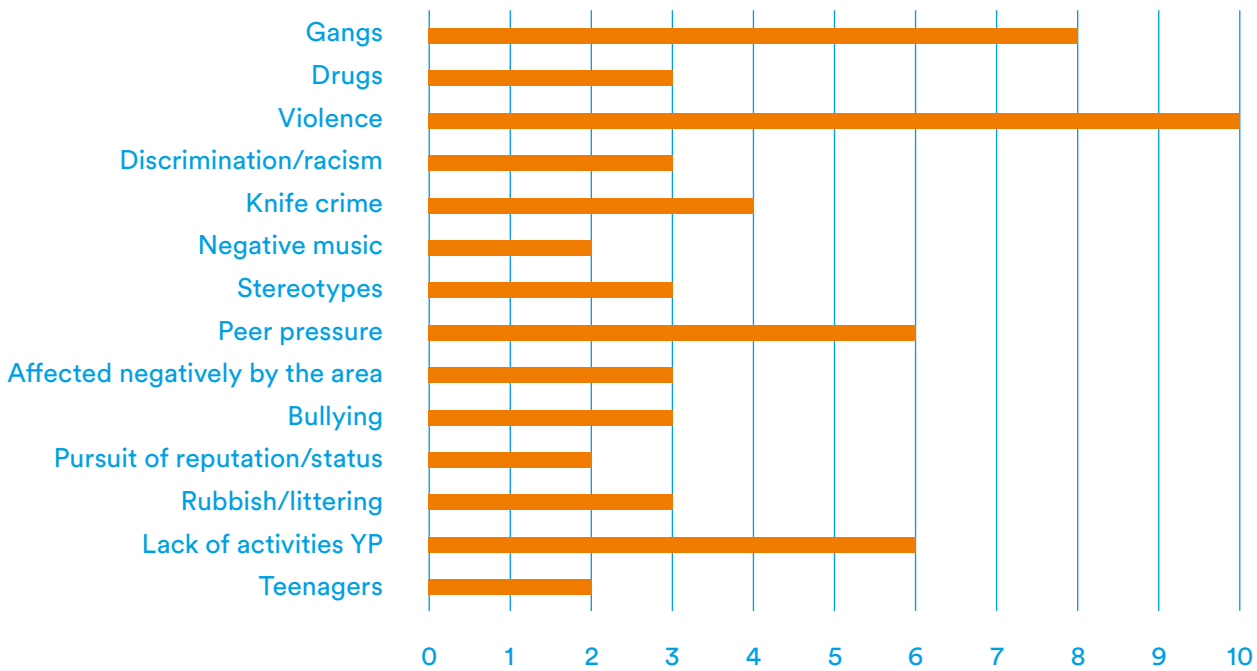
The insights of Primary-age young people were particularly noteworthy – some of our youngest respondents gave the most powerful responses to our questions. Children are acutely aware of the issues affecting their friends, parents, and neighbourhood.

The problems covered in this chapter warrant extensive discussion, due to their urgency and complexity. Many of these issues have affected generations of young people in the area over a number of years or even decades, and have become somewhat entrenched – making it all the more important to understand their nuances from the perspective of young people themselves.

In both our surveys, we asked what the biggest problems are for young people in the area. In the semi-structured survey, respondents were asked this as an open-ended question. The results are shown below, in the first bar chart.

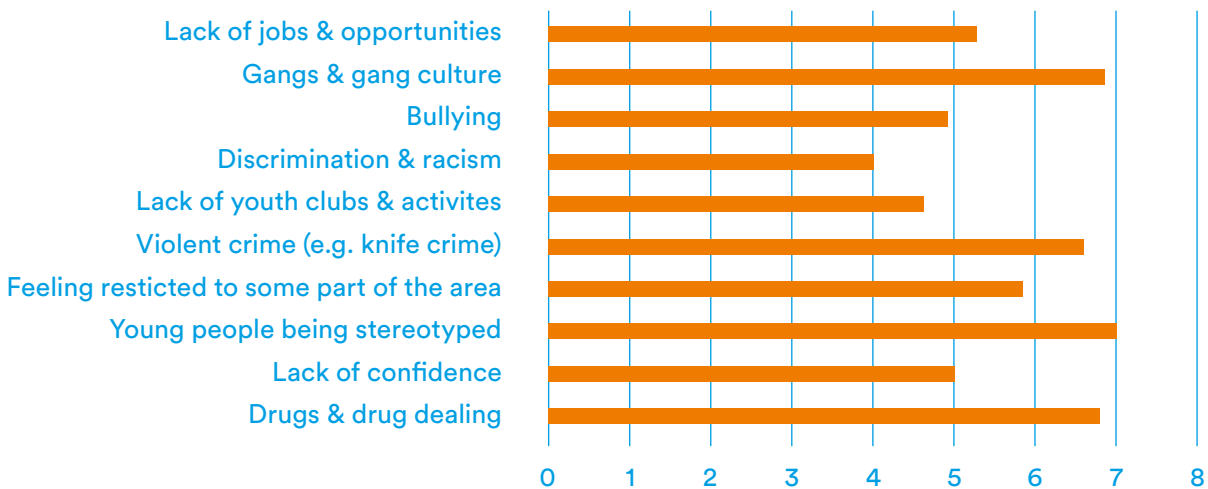
The second chart shows how the seriousness of different problems was rated in the structured survey. The problems that we asked young people to rate in this survey were decided by young people, based on a pilot survey.

Number of times each of these things was mentioned in answers to the question "What do you think are the main problems for young people in your area?"



Shown below are average ratings from our respondents.

On a scale of 1-10, how big are these problems for young people in your area?

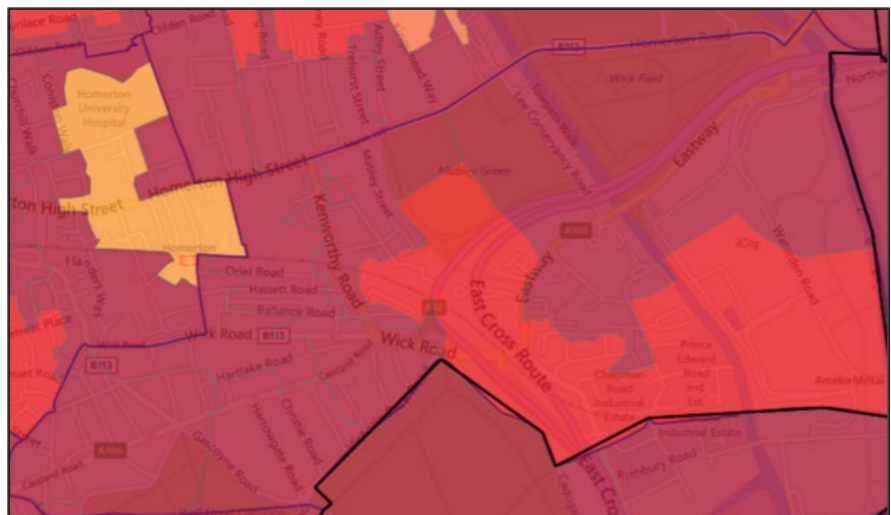
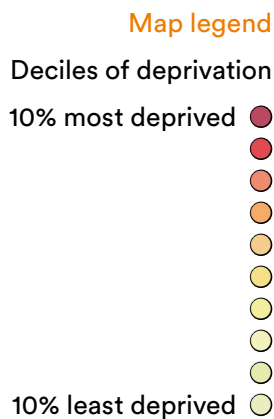


1= This isn't really a problem in my area at all

10 = This is a massive problem which affects lots of young people really badly



## 3.1 Crime, safety and violence



Source: <http://dclgapps.communities.gov.uk/ind/idmap.html> [last accessed 22/08/2017]

The map above indicates that much of Hackney Wick falls into the top 10% most deprived areas of the country for crime, according to Index of Multiple Deprivation data.

Some young people and parents mentioned crime as a general issue, for example:

There's too much crime! (Male parent surveyed, who gave the area 3/10)

There's lots of crime here (Primary pupil, verbal comment during workshop)

Crime - there's so much bad people they create crime but no one sorts it out (Primary pupil on activity sheet, when writing about what they don't like in the area)

Young people often mentioned not feeling safe. During workshops, we often asked groups to stand at a particular part of the room to indicate how safe they feel in the area, from 0-10. At St Barnabas Church youth group, made up of teenagers, most of the young people went over to 0. At Gainsborough (Primary) school, the majority stood at around 5. Comments from these groups included:

You feel like you're gonna die

Everyone is scared

We need to be safe, we don't wanna die

In the structured survey, one 8 year-old female respondent wrote that the area is "not safe or fun", and a parent wrote that their child is "scared of playing out."

An 11 year-old who took part in a focus group made it clear that she only feels safe when she's with other people:

I feel safe as long I'm with a member of my family or someone I trust. If I'm by myself then no! When I'm by myself it should be in a place where I know a lot of people.

Though violence was the most frequent cause of concern, drunkenness and local pubs were also mentioned in relation to safety – comments included:

drunk people not safe (written by primary pupil on map near Kenworthy Road)

drunk people (activity sheet – something they want to change in the area)

I would like to change the bars to be less crazy (as above)

there are always drunk people when I go to school and look at me (activity sheet – something they don't like)

As indicated by the charts at the start of this section, violence and violent crime are perceived to be major problems in Hackney Wick for young people. In one focus group we asked young people to talk about how safe they feel in the area, out of 10. Their answers often included mention of violence, such as:

Feel fine walking down the street, but there are stabbings and shootings. Feels like every day something happens in Hackney. Don't know if it's safe for people around me. (15 year-old female who said she feels 5/10 safe)

There is violence, more dangerous for boys, sometimes people look for trouble, never felt unsafe. (16 year-old female who said she feels 8/10 safe)

Similarly, when talking about crime young people often referred specifically to violence, especially knife and gun crime:

There's a lot of crime...the other day... three gunshots, someone got shot. How many stabbings...? (16 year-old male during focus group)

In almost every workshop in schools, youth clubs and other settings, violence and fear of violence was brought up. On their activity sheets, many young people from primary schools wrote emotively about this problem:

I want there to be less violence because everyone has a right to live

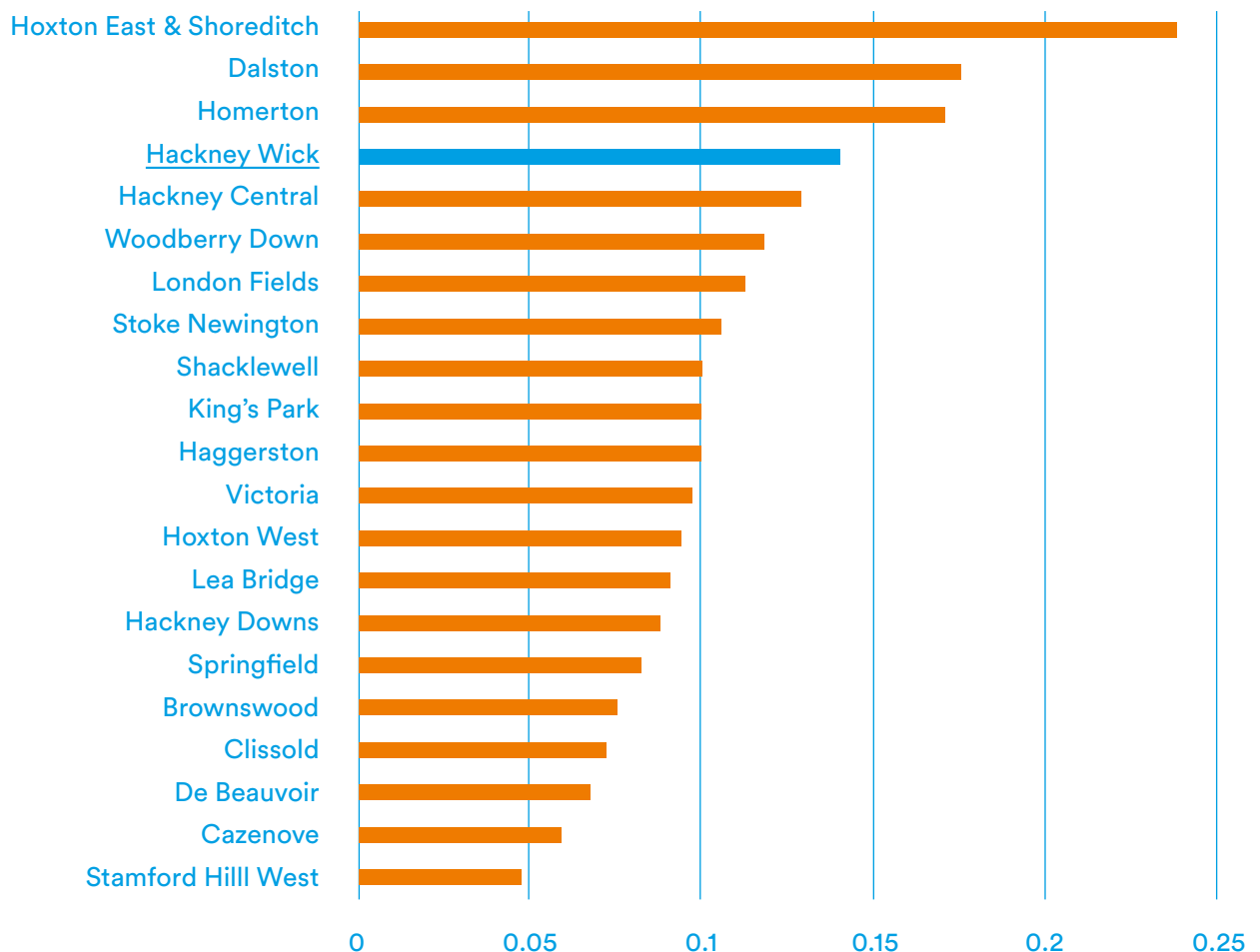
There shouldn't be killing because everyone should have a chance to live

Less killing because it's not safe and everyone deserves to live

People stop killing each other because people are dying too young

The data for 2010-2016 does show that Hackney Wick has one of the highest rates of violent crime in Hackney, as seen in the chart below. This data doesn't specify the age of victims or perpetrators.

Total number of reported violent crimes<sup>1</sup> between Apr 2010 and Dec 2016, divided by ward population<sup>2</sup>



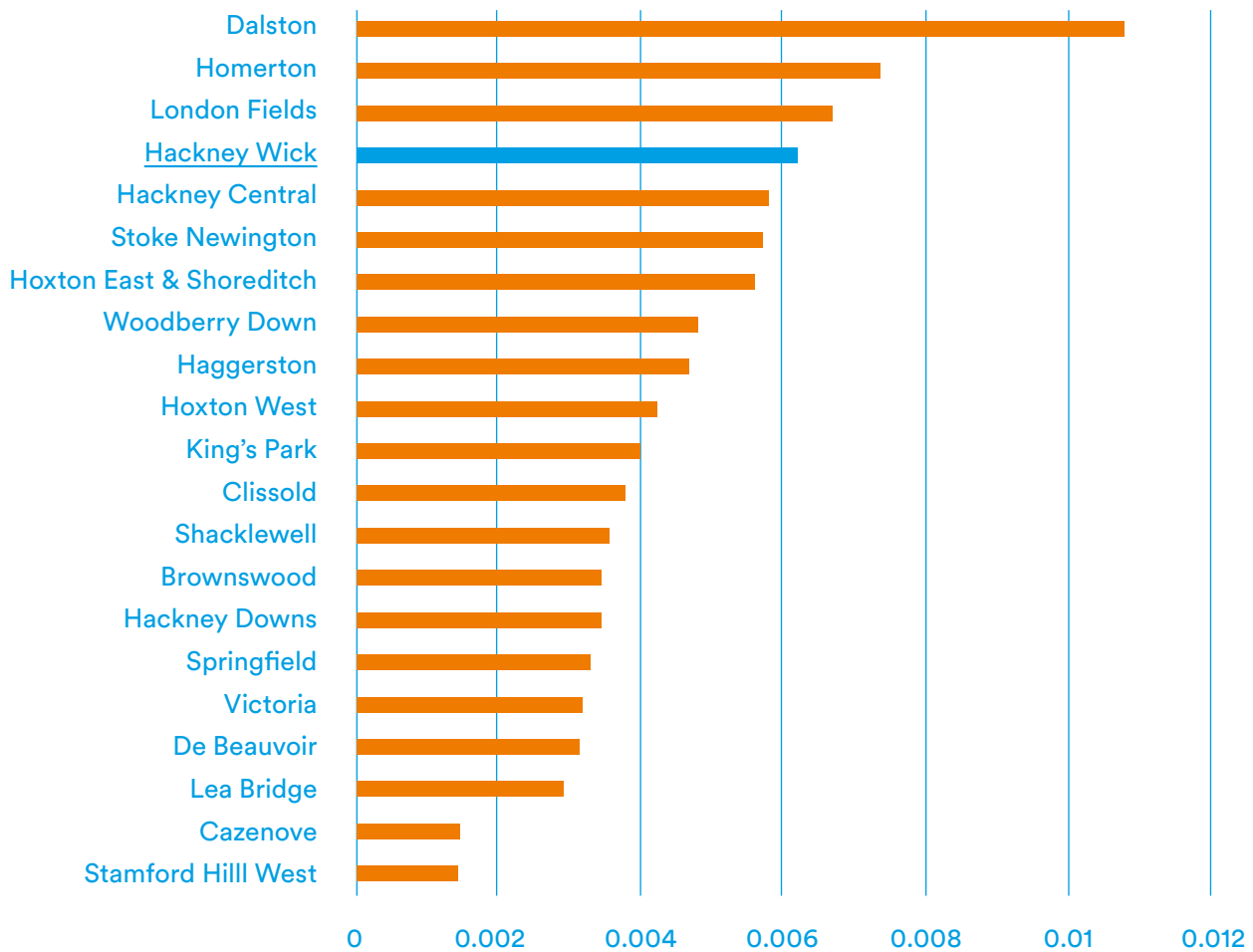
<sup>1</sup> Includes wounding/GBH, assault with injury and common assault

<sup>2</sup> Office for National Statistics estimate for mid-2015

Source for data: [https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/recorded\\_crime\\_summary](https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/recorded_crime_summary) [last accessed 22/08/2017]

Similarly, Hackney Wick has among the highest rates of offensive weapon offences. Again, the data in the chart below gives no indication of the extent to which young people are involved in this activity.

Recorded offensive weapon offences, Apr 2010 - Dec 2016, divided by ward population<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Office for National Statistics estimate for mid-2015

Source for data: [https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/recorded\\_crime\\_summary](https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/recorded_crime_summary) [last accessed 22/08/2017]

It would appear from this data that local young people's concern about violent crime is not unfounded.

As the survey results and wordcloud presented at the start of this section suggest, gangs were very frequently mentioned by the young people involved in our research, often in relation to the issues of crime, safety and violence.

For example, when discussing how safe they feel in Hackney Wick, two focus group participants said:

Most of the crime affects people involved in gangs. (12 year-old female, who said she feels 7/10 safe)

Hackney isn't safe, boys are in danger as they're often gang-affiliated (19 year-old female, who said she feels 5/10 safe)

What struck us when engaging with young people was not just the amount that gangs came up in conversation or were written about, but also the many different aspects of the problem that were mentioned – this is the topic explored in the next section.

## 3.2 “Gangs”

Gangs were perhaps the most frequently discussed topic during our research with young people. We gained insight from them into many different significant aspects of this issue in the local area, warranting extended discussion. This section is therefore split into five sub-sections, each discussing a different question:

What are the effects of gangs on young people in the area?

Is it possible to avoid being affected by gangs as a young person in Hackney Wick?

How and why do young people get involved in gangs?

Is the problem of gangs in the area getting better or worse?

What do young people mean when they talk about “gangs”?

### What are the effects of gangs on young people in the area?

From the young people we engaged, it is clear that gangs, gang culture and gang crime have a range of negative effects on the local area. Firstly, many young people – especially those from Primary schools – mentioned being fearful, and often related this to weapons:

There are a lot of gangs...You can feel in danger and you don't even want to go outside (11-year old female respondent to structured survey – rated the area 3/10)

I don't like gangsters around my area and I get scared a lot (Primary pupil on activity sheet)

Gangs - they are scary because they are always following you and chasing (Primary pupil on activity sheet)

The dangerous gangs because I get scared (Primary pupil, idea for change on activity sheet)

I don't like gangs because they carry knives with them (Primary pupil on activity sheet)

Gangs with dangerous weapons (Primary pupil, idea for change on activity sheet)

Parents are of course affected by this fear, too. A parent we spoke to, who has a teenage son, said:

I worry every day “is my son gonna make it home alive?” My favourite sound every day is his key in the door.

Many of the young people who completed our activity sheet wrote about the need for improved security in the area or on their estates, and often linked this to gangs:

Put guards around to look out for gangs in the area causing trouble (Primary pupil, idea for change on activity sheet)

I would change the gates and have security so gangs wouldn't get in (Primary pupil, idea for change on activity sheet)

Remove gangsters. Scary to nearby residents, I want to prevent that. Could add security, e.g. ID cards for the estates. (Primary pupil, idea for change during a workshop)

Fear can often cause young people to feel restricted to certain areas. This issue arose when we were inviting young people to get involved in our panel – some felt unable to join because they wouldn't feel comfortable travelling the short distance to Hackney Quest. Similar feelings of restriction emerged during interviews, too, for instance:

I don't go under the bridge, I go round, cos I don't really like travelling through that certain area (13 year-old male)

The parent quoted above spoke at length about the restrictions that affect her son:

It's not like he doesn't like going out to do stuff, but he's less inclined to do it in the local area... he's not even in a gang but he can't go anywhere... he can go, but he feels it's a better choice to not go. It's sad... I'm sure he over-dramatises things, I think in teenage heads things become bigger than they actually really are and I keep reassuring him that in 25 years he won't even know who some of these people are... I'm like “what's the matter with you? Just go! You can't run scared!”

One 19-year old that we interviewed spoke about how localised this restriction can become, and about how it can affect relationships:

It doesn't really ever make sense... all the beef...E8 and E9 – London Fields and Well Street, or whatever, Mare Street – it's a road apart but they still have problems... See my friend, she lives in London Fields, so that's E8. And now, what she did was that she went to see someone from the opposite side. The amount of times she got smacked up because of it! It's basically an area telling you: “you cannot go to that area and start seeing that person, because you're from that area” I feel like, in the life that we live, who are you to tell me who I can see? But that's just how it is.

The same young person pointed out that this is a problem affecting young people across London:

I feel like nowadays you can't even sit and say "yeah, Hackney's bad", cos it doesn't matter where you go, everywhere is bad. Like, a boy could leave this centre now and go to somewhere – let's say he's going to visit his Aunt in South London – and still get moved to cos they just haven't seen him before. So it's just like... it doesn't matter what area... everywhere's bad.

Perhaps the most dispiriting effect of gangs in Hackney Wick – or the perception of gangs, at least – is that it undermines young people's enjoyment of the best things in the area. Every single place in the local area which we mentioned in the previous chapter as valuable to young people was seen to be affected by gangs by at least one young person who engaged with our research. Gangs were said to affect local parks, local shops, local playgrounds, and local stations. Comments included:

I don't really like how some gangs are always outside the shops smoking and blasting loud music (comment on activity sheet)

Fish Park - there used to be all fun stuff. But no-one goes any more cos a gang stay there (on activity sheet)

I don't like the park - gangs are always there and I don't get a chance to play (on activity sheet)

When we are playing football the gangs come and interrupt us (on activity sheet)

I don't like Daubeney Park because there are loads of gangs (on activity sheet)

Great place to train to become a footballer but sometimes there's gangs around (comment about Hackney Marshes on the map)

I like it but don't feel safe because I've seen loads of gangs hang out (comment about Olympic Park on map)

One Primary pupil summed up this issue when writing about what they didn't like in the area:

The gangs because they keep on destroying the things that children like and they're scary

There were concerns about gangs affecting new provision in the area, too. A parent we interviewed discussed this with her son:

[To son:] "If there was a youth centre here would you use it?" "No" "Why?" "You know how much mandem would go there?" "No, from local, like in Hackney Wick." "Do you know how much beef there would be?" "Why?" "People would find out, 'oh yeah, he

## I don't really like travelling through that certain area

(13 year-old male)

goes to that youth club, let's go duck it." "Not just you, I'm talking generally." "Not me, everyone here."

[To us:] "There you go. If you open it, it's a problem, because then they'll be like 'they go here, this is where we can find them.'"

A parent who completed our structured survey expressed similar concerns:

I think that the biggest problem is the gang culture which then controls everything else. Ordinarily, any project or interaction with the youths should be beneficial i.e. an increase in centres where they can get involved in things they are interested in, learn new skills etc, but I think you would end up with specific 'gangs' in specific centres putting other youths who are not inclined in the same way from attending. If the gang culture could be tackled, then things would be much better.

It is of course difficult to say whether these worries are justified, or whether specific young people have any reason to feel threatened by the groups they describe as gangs in particular places. But the fear is significant in itself, and plays a significant role in the lives of many local young people.



## Is it possible to avoid being affected by gangs as a young person in Hackney Wick?

One question we asked young people was how possible they feel it is to avoid being affected by gangs in the area. With younger school pupils, we only asked this if they had already raised the topic of gangs themselves – which they did almost without exception. In Daubeney and Kingsmead Primaries, for instance, we requested a show of hands from those who think it is and isn't possible to avoid being affected by gangs.

In Daubeney School, in a group of 30 Year Sixes, 5 said it is possible, 25 said it isn't

In Kingsmead School, in a group of 30 Year Fives, 10 said it is possible, 20 said it isn't

Young people mentioned different factors which affect how likely you are to be affected or approached by gangs. School situation, street knowledge, demeanour, age, and independence of mind were among the factors mentioned:

If I had gone to school here, woulda affected me more... for me it's easy cos I don't go school in Hackney (Teenager, verbal comment during workshop)

Loads of my school were kicked out and joined a gang (As above)

I'm not the type of person who's easily influenced (As above)

You have to know how to walk, act normal. How you look at them is important. (15-year old male, verbal comment during workshop)

Play smart if you're gonna be moved to (15-year old male, verbal comment during workshop)

If you're under 10 no-one will touch you, unless you're tall for your age! (14-year old male, verbal comment during workshop)

If you walk like you're bad, they're gonna treat you like you're bad. They'll be like "where you from? Why you in my area?" ... It doesn't make sense, but this is just how life is. (19 year-old female, interview)

Gender was often mentioned as an important factor – there was general agreement that boys are more likely to be affected than girls. For instance:

I think females will feel more comfortable to walk through Hackney Wick, like in the dark and that...I think males might find that a little bit intimidating, because of the gangs and all of that (16 year-old female, interview)

It limits where he can go. Whereas my daughter didn't really have that problem...I think for boys, their social movements are a lot more restricted than girls, I think...Whereas my daughter went Victoria Park a lot more, he doesn't. And purely by postcode wars. (Parent, interview)

The suggestion from some young people, though, was that nothing can protect you entirely:

Nowadays boys don't care they would smack you up the same way they'd smack up a boy. What type of life are we living? (19-year old female, interview)

He was on the back of the bus and then some boys saw him and...just stabbed him in his neck. He's just like... he was a proper nerdy type, like he didn't look like he would do anything to anybody. Not that I know him, so I can't assume he wasn't gang-affiliated or he didn't know anyone, but sometimes people just like randomly... like there's a lot of boys who ain't about it, but they still get killed. (16 year-old female, interview)

One comment, from a 14 year-old female at Cardinal Pole, helped highlight the extent to which young people's lives can become wrapped up with gang culture in the area. She said:

I believe that if there were no gangs, how would you get your music?

The popularity of gang-based drill music is well-known. It is difficult to say how much this has an impact on the wider issue of gangs, but it does mean that – for some young people – gangs and gang rivalry is something they encounter through their headphones or on videos as well as on the street.

## How and why do young people get involved in gangs?

Among the young people we engaged in our research, a number of different theories emerged as to why young people ended up getting involved in gangs. Clearly, a range of factors are involved. Worryingly, children as young as 11 were talking about gangs trying to get young people to do things for them:

Gangs try to force you to do things, like give things to people when you're not allowed (11 year-old male, verbal comment during workshop)

Gangs try to make you do bad things (11 year-old male who gave the area 0/10, verbal comment during workshop)

It could obviously be seen as good thing that they are aware of grooming, but it could equally be construed as concerning evidence of the age at which young

people start becoming targeted. Some young people mentioned the role of family members when talking about this issue:

He said he was peer-pressured into it...because his cousin was involved (12 year-old female, focus group)

Sometimes they're born into it... I don't know, their family might be about it (16 year-old female, interview)

A 19 year-old we interviewed spoke about the difficulty of extricating yourself from association with a gang, if you've grown up in the group:

A lot of the boys that they interact with and a lot of the boys who say "gang gang gang" are boys who they've grown up with from little. So it's like... it's not that easy to get out of it. Because you've already been affiliating yourself with them from when you was young, so why is it any different now, that because you're older...? Because you've affiliated yourself you don't even have to be part of the gang but because you've affiliated yourself with them... That's it.

Reputation, respect and status often cropped up as significant factors. They were mentioned in survey answers as problems for young people – the pressure to pursue reputation and status, and to be known. Young people spoke about this issue with particular force during focus groups, for example in this exchange between "P" (16, female) and "D" (19, female):

P → I feel like young people's egos are so big and high, like, they're just so big, and I wouldn't even know how to take it down...it's reputation and people just not giving a shit...and sometimes it's a respect thing as well... there are so many things, there are so many levels to it, so many levels to young people

D → It's all for a name.

P → Yeah, so no-one will mess with you...Sometimes

it's a thing where they're just trying to make a name. Cos it's like once you've made your name, certain people won't mess with you. And it's like... people prefer that. These are people that do roads, beat up people.

A 13 year-old male that we interviewed spoke about the issue in similar terms, when we asked him what the main problems are for young people in the area:

Erm... keeping up a reputation, that's their problem... some of them get into drugs for it. Cos, just to keep a reputation...if there's a popular guy, for them to become unpopular and for you to become popular... depending on your age... so if you're like 12-14, you'd probably beat them up, which would give you authority over them. Or if you're like 16 or over, you'd probably...you know...[stabbing gesture]

Fear of losing reputation and becoming a victim is also significant. One 16 year-old spoke about this in terms of 'violation':

...That fear of being violated. They don't wanna look like the victim, so they think – if they have a bunch of boys backing them, that can defend them, then they know "I cannot be violated, no-one can take the piss out of me...I'm not an idiot" So I feel like it's mainly a pride thing – that's pride, innit? They don't wanna look like an idiot, so they associate themselves with a bunch of boys so that they can look cool together.

Social media can heighten the stakes when it comes to gaining and maintaining reputation. One survey respondent mentioned social media causing pressure to be violent, and a 16 year-old we interviewed said they think gang problems are getting worse at the moment because of it. We asked a 19 year-old whether she thinks that social media is actually making things worse, or whether it's the case that things happen the same, but are now more visible on social media. Her response:

It's both, it's both. Because when it comes to social media... like at some point in the middle of last year – Periscope. I dunno where that came from yeah, but all of a sudden...there were so many violent things done on Periscope. What makes it worse is that it's live...People obviously use this to their advantage to be like "you know what? Let me do this..." Like I've seen people get stripped and battered on Periscope... Social media don't help...he's there stripping that person on the street, another person's gonna think "I'm not even gonna try and go to that person or I'm not gonna mess with that person" He's basically just marked his territory – like "If you come and do anything to me, this is what's gonna happen." So social media a lot of the time, it doesn't really help...

## Keeping up a reputation, that's their problem

(13 year-old male)

# Within 24 hours three or four people had offered [my son] drugs as a way of making money.

(parent)

Young people spoke about how being in music videos or just pictures with certain people can be a sign of affiliation which could put you at risk:

Just being in a photo shoot or a music video, you are affiliated with them. “I am in beef with you, when I see you I’ll move to you.” (19 year-old female, interview)

Let’s say your boy’s in problems with certain boys, and, obviously, you’re gonna be putting Snaps up, and you don’t know everybody on your Snap...They could be your ops [opposition – someone you’re in beef with], they’ll see your girl and think “okay, you’re messing with me so I’m gonna go mess with your girl.” And then they use the girlfriend as a way to, like, aggravate the boy to get more drama. (16 year-old female, interview)

During one of our focus groups, the young people we were speaking to became distracted by something on one of their phones – it was “beef” in Mare Street that was being shown on Snapchat. It’s impossible to say whether social media changes the nature of the problem, or is just a new medium through which it is played out, but it seems to be playing an increasingly prominent role in local youth violence.

Some of the young people we spoke to emphasised that money is often a key motivator:

*Do you think reputation is the only cause [of gang involvement], or do you think other things are involved?*

Yeah, things like money – people owe people and don’t want to pay them back (13 year-old male)

I feel like sometimes people do certain stuff, like, okay let’s say boys now, or whoever sells drugs, they feel like they wanna get their money up, innit, so let’s say – hypothetically – at home you’re not really getting much money, like your mum’s working very hard but she can’t provide for you... At the end of the day, they’re trying to get their money. Not everyone is as fortunate as people living in the richer areas, and they got more money. (16 year-old female, interview)

The parent we interviewed highlighted how, for some teenagers such as her son, frequent offers come in for money in exchange for drug running or dealing:

Older boys trying to ask them to sell drugs all the time, stuff like that. The other week we had an argument, I wouldn’t give him no pocket money because he’s out of college. He’s refusing to get a Saturday job. Blah blah blah. Classic teenager. I said “right, that’s it, I’m cutting off your money.” Within 24 hours three or four people had offered him drugs as a way of making money.

Despite all these factors, choice is obviously still involved, as some were keen to stress:

They always seem to say... ‘I don’t have a choice’ (19 year-old female, interview)

I do think a lot of it is choice. Like [person], for example, she’s chosen not to go down that lifestyle and she lives a great life. She goes out where she wants, she’s working. I think boys, by making the wrong decisions, peer pressure or whatever, stupid decisions, they limit their own worlds...there comes a point that you have to stop blaming social surroundings or peer pressure and stuff like that, and you have to say, you know what, yeah, your kids make their own choices...he’s had every opportunity, from theatre to youth clubs to mentors... he chooses not to go to them because of this, because of that. (Parent, interview)

## Is the gang problem in the area getting better or worse?

Opinions differed on this question. Some suggested that the problem is getting better:

The gang issue is getting better but will never go away (15 year-old female, verbal comment during workshop)

I don’t really see it getting worse, it’s getting better (13 year-old male, interview)

Others disagreed:

It's escalated in the last five years, dramatically. Each year it escalates more and more... I would say in the last 3-4 years it's got really rife. (Parent, interview)

I feel like it's getting worse nowadays, like it's getting worse. And because everyone's trying to be on top, trying to be this bad man... like I don't know, everyone's just following in everyone's footsteps. (16 year-old female, interview)

Clearly, different young people and parents have different experiences and impressions of the issue, leading them to different conclusions. Perhaps most interesting in this collection of quotes is the repeated assertion that it can't be stopped and won't go away – this seems to reflect perception of how deep-rooted and entrenched the issue is in Hackney Wick.

### What do young people mean when they talk about “gangs”?

The young people we engaged with spoke in different ways about gangs. Many of them seemed to be referring to organised or semi-organised groups of people engaging in territorial criminal activity – which might be said to match the ‘standard’ definition of criminal gangs. But one of the most worrying findings of our research was the way that some young people aged 8-11 spoke about “gangs”. Some within this age bracket spoke about gangs in a manner which aligned with the definition above, but a large number seemed to talk about “gangs” and teenagers as if they're the same thing. For instance, in the comments below from activity sheets:

I would stop the fighting of teenagers

I don't like teenagers they're noisy

Sometimes the gangs always have fights (scares me)

Boy gangs because they're loud

Written comments also included reference to “gangs of teenagers”, and in workshop discussions with this age group the words “gang” and “teenager” seemed to be almost interchangeable. It is deeply concerning if gangs and teenagers are being equated with one another, for two main reasons. Firstly, it's disturbing in itself if there is a general fear of teenagers among local children. Secondly, if children are growing up thinking that teenagers and gangs are practically the same thing, it puts them in a vulnerable position if they're approached by gangs – they might assume that being in a gang is just ‘what you do’ when you reach a certain age. This is despite what we were told

by Hackney Youth Offending Team about the tiny number of young people involved in Hackney's criminal justice system:

There were fewer than 300 children involved in formal youth justice in Hackney [in 2016]. This is around 1% or less of the 10-17 population. In some wards children in trouble with the law could be in single figures.

Only a very tiny proportion of local young people are involved in the criminal justice system (the figure quoted only includes those who have been caught, of course). Clearly, work needs to be done to tackle the association in children's minds between teenagers and gangs, especially when they think about their own futures – as one 15 year-old participant in our research put it: “people need to know that there are other options.”

**Let's say – hypothetically – at home you're not really getting much money, like your mum's working very hard but she can't provide for you... At the end of the day, they're trying to get their money.**

(16 year old female)

## 3.3 Is there enough for young people to do?

As covered in the previous chapter, there are many places in Hackney Wick which young people value – places they enjoy spending time and from which they get a lot of enjoyment. In some cases, young people suggested that these places provide them with plenty to do:

Lots of activities at youth club (comment on activity sheet)

There is so many activities to play (comment on activity sheet – the young person had also mentioned having cages near their house)

I like the park because there is lots to do (comment on activity sheet)

A 13 year-old boy that we interviewed similarly said “there’s always something to do.”

In general, however, this was a minority view – it was more common for young people and parents involved in our research to suggest that there is not enough in the area for young people.

A lack of activities was mentioned and/or rated quite highly as a problem in both our surveys, and came up frequently on the activity sheets. Comments from young people included:

There is not much to do (18 year-old female, survey, rated the area 4/10)

I like living in my area, but there's just not much going on (18 year-old female, survey, rated the area 8/10)

Been here all my life, it's boring... There needs to be more things going on (19 year-old female, survey, rated the area 1/10)

Boring because there are nothing to do (Activity sheet)

Nothing to do - it's boring (Activity sheet)

Nothing to do (Activity sheet)

Parents expressed similar concerns:

Not many facilities in Hackney Wick, bit of a "no man's land", lots of buildings, not too many public amenities, major thoroughfares (Male parent, survey)

Hackney Wick is inaccessible and looks industrial, busy car thoroughfare through the area, Hackney Wick can feel deserted, outdoor spaces not great (Male parent, survey)

Not enough youth clubs and activities to keep them occupied and exercise their time (Female parent, survey)

Not too much going on - lack of youth clubs & activities (Female parent, survey)

Not much round here (Male parent, survey)

There's nothing socially for them here...There's nothing here for youths, there's nothing. (Female parent, interview)

During a focus group we ran with “E” (19-year-old female) and “F” (17-year-old male) they focused heavily on the lack of activities for children and young people in Hackney Wick:

E → Hackney Wick isn't really child-friendly...

F → Hackney Wick's not really an area for young people to socialise...there is nothing there, literally...

E → Hackney Wick is actually abandoned, there isn't enough for children to do...There's isn't much to do... when I was in like Year 7 there was a lot of youth clubs going on, a lot of them have been shut down, obviously because of funding... you can't enjoy the area you're living in if there isn't very much to do, there ain't activity centres in the area...

We had a tour of Hackney Wick with two boys, one aged 8 and one aged 12, both of whom live a short distance from Hackney Wick station. The 8 year-old complained about a lack of things to do where he lives, but spoke positively about Victoria Park and the Olympic Park. Interestingly, he said that he wanted to build a zip wire between the two – which would completely skip Hackney Wick.

The twelve-year-old similarly suggested that there's not much to do other than the Olympic Park, and that “it needs more stuff here.”

They both mentioned that they play football on their estate, but they aren't meant to. They use a bench as a goal, and get told off for it. This again highlights the value of small, local play facilities, which also came up on the activity sheets:

There are not enough activities for my age and the cage is dangerous because it's concrete

Not a lot of children play outside like my old area so you always have to stay indoors and find something else to do

Comments such as these suggest that new local play facilities, or improvements to existing ones, could potentially make a big difference to young people who don't currently feel well catered-for.

A number of young people spoke to us about the consequences of there not being enough to do in the area. This came up during workshops – one 17-year old said that there is nothing to do, and that “if people are not busy they will find something bad to do.” During a workshop at Primary School, one pupil

suggested that to improve the area there should be more activities for teenagers, as this “might stop so many fights around the estate.”

“E” and “F” spoke about this at length, and were concerned about the effects of funding cuts:

F → There needs to be more things for children. Cos I feel like there’s a lot of children on the road... I think if there were fundays, children would go... Right now, being for real, children are out on the streets at like 11 at night, and if there’s nothing to do... there needs to be more things for children... With the youth clubs... the days that they do it... they don’t do it as frequently... they do it just one day... that’s more kids on the street. If they did it more days it would attract more people.

E → When it comes to activities for young people, to keep them off the street, to keep them safe, there’s always an excuse [from the government]... when I went youth club, there was loads of things to do... the opportunities and the activities that we got was mad... it’s crazy to see how much change there’s been in the last 5 years... the opportunities... there’s nothing there. The less activities and opportunities there are, the more you’ve got people on the roads. To the point where you even have young girls chilling on the blocks cos there isn’t nothing to do. But, they don’t care! The excuse is always “it’s funding it’s funding”. No-one is asking you for a million pound, we’re just saying take them out for the day, take them Thorpe Park, take them on a residential trip.

## Children are out on the streets at like 11 at night

(17 year-old male)

## The less activities and opportunities there are, the more you’ve got people on the streets

(19 year old female)

During another focus group, the young people suggested that there isn’t much awareness of the activities and opportunities that do exist for young people. Comments included:

There are youth clubs, but depends on who you know – friends linking you to things. A lot of young people aren’t aware of opportunities (16 year-old female)

There are opportunities but people aren’t aware (15 year-old female)

If parents aren’t involved in the community, they won’t know about stuff happening (12 year-old female)

Young people aren’t pushed into the opportunities enough (19 year-old female)

The suggestion from this group was that a large number of young people could benefit from existing provision, but either don’t know about it or haven’t been encouraged to explore them. Of course, local youth provision has limited capacity, as “E” and “F” emphasised in relation to funding, but more could perhaps be done to make a wider group of young people aware of what’s available.

## 3.4 Housing, deprivation & the local environment

A number of young people and parents suggested that housing issues affect their quality of life in the local area. This came up in surveys, during workshops, and on activity sheets:

Like the area overall, don't like the estate we live in. Lots of housing issues and anti-social behaviour. (Parent, survey response)

I have a small house (Comment on activity sheet in answer to "What don't you like about your area?")

Damp in the houses (As above)

The council don't respond to people's complaints (As above)

Council not speaking back to residents (Written comment during workshop)

One young person was particularly forceful during a workshop in a local Primary school – he said that he wanted his block of flats to be torn down because it was so dirty, and double-checked to make sure that we'd written down his comment. In the "Things I'd like to change about my area" column of the activity sheet, many young people wrote about wanting improvements to housing:

Flats could be improved

I will extend the houses so that they're good places to live in

Build houses with a bit of space between them

The space in the house to a bigger one and add a big garden

Clean the houses

Make the houses bigger

Many young people also showed an awareness of the cost of housing in the area on their sheets:

Rent is too high - I'll put the rent down to an affordable amount

My neighbour can't afford the rent so she's moving house

Make the houses cheaper

Homelessness was a concern for many as well:

Give homeless people a house because they sleep in boxes (Activity sheet comment)

More awareness for important issues, e.g. homeless (Workshop comment)

Should be more charities, especially to help the homeless (Workshop comment)

More help for homeless (Activity sheet comment)

Get homes for the poor kids (Survey comment)

Young people in the local area are conscious of deprivation and disadvantage more broadly, and this arose frequently in our research. One survey respondent, a 16 year-old female, gave the area an overall score of 3/10 "because the community is poor". When discussing problems in the area, one 8 year-old said "How did they get poor, most of the kids?"

A parent we interviewed spoke strongly about inequality in the area:

*Do you think Hackney Wick is different for rich and poor young people?*

That's a good question. I think if you're rich, your world is already open to different opportunities from an earlier age. So your social climate will probably be very different than here...I think that has a lot to do with class and money and stuff. It's hard work being a single parent...As a London girl working, got my own business, I should have been able to buy a house years ago, I've never been able to afford it.

On the activity sheets, a number of young people expressed a wish for life to be more affordable in the local area, and for there to be more help for those who are struggling:

Increase wages

Create a food bank nearby so the people who can't afford to buy things they need can go to the foodbank.

No queen taking money from the poor people

Help being rich!!

Create foodbanks, help people afford things

Lower shop prices

Make things cheaper!

Cheaper things

During a workshop with teenagers, one wrote that "Money" is a big problem for young people in the area, and as an example of a consequence of this, wrote "school leavers joining gang and drug dealing". This relates to the discussion of gangs above – though it cannot excuse criminal activity, deprivation and a desire for money are often contributing factors.

There was a tendency among the Primary-age young people to focus on issues with the local environment when completing their activity sheets. They often commented about noise in the area or in their block, for instance, and this was sometimes linked to the housing density:

## 3.5 Stereotypes

The houses are too close to each other so you can hear some close neighbours

I don't like the upstairs neighbours noise, because it keeps me up

People living beneath me make too much noise

Littering and dog mess were also complained about – particularly their impact on things of value in the area, and on the area's image:

The area is very dirty and polluted. It smells and there's dog poo everywhere, cigarette butts on the floor (workshop comment)

There is a lot of litter in the play area (Activity sheet comment)

I would change the amount of litter that goes into the canal because it should be treated with respect (As above)

I want people to stop littering because it makes the area look bad (As above)

Particularly when in combination with housing problems, it seems that issues such as these can have a real effect on young people's quality of life, and on their pride in their area.

**Create a food bank nearby so the people who can't afford to buy things they need can go to the foodbank.**

(suggestion from young person on activity sheet)

In our structured survey, "Young people being stereotyped" was rated on average as being the biggest problem for young people in the area. During our research, it was clear that some young people felt stereotyped both because of where they come from and their age.

Some were very aware of how Hackney is sometimes perceived:

There's a stereotypical view of Hackney that it is a bad place and people look down on people (12 year-old female, written comment during workshop)

When I said to people that I'm from Hackney they're like "Oh yeah, London Fields Boys!" That shouldn't be the first thing that you just connect Hackney with. (19 year-old female, interview)

Yeah people assume that Hackney is bad. I say I'm from Hackney and people are like "oh...okay..." (16 year-old female, interview)

Others focused on how they think they're viewed as young people:

Young people are always judged by appearance (14 year-old male, survey)

Sometimes the adults look down on us...if I'm walking around in like a tracksuit...people just assume like "look at her, they probably don't have the right home", they will judge me without knowing me. In our area, people judge – pre-judge – too much...I've seen arguments between old people and young people... there should be that respect level. As much as we're supposed to respect you as adults, we need that respect back, and I don't feel like...not every adult has that respect for us (16 year-old female, interview)

One 19 year-old we interviewed suggested that young people don't always help themselves, because of the way they portray and represent themselves:

*Have you noticed stereotyping of young people?*

Yeah, 100%. I feel like that's never gonna change though, I feel like that's always gonna be there. I also feel like the reason why young people are stereotyped is because of how they portray themselves. A lot of people don't really help themselves... you gonna become a target, you gonna be stereotyped because of what you do

Other young people highlighted the role of the media in encouraging stereotypes:

I don't like misconceptions...people being judged for how they look or because of what they see in the media (15 year-old female, focus group)

*Why do you think this stereotyping happens?*



TV, news. On the news all you ever see is ‘a young boy was stabbed in Hackney’, this boy did that, a girl started a fight. It’s all young people in a bad light, and we never put light on young people that are doing good things. So I think that’s a reason why so many adults pre-judge... (16 year-old female, focus group)

We know from the Youth Offending Team that only a tiny proportion of Hackney’s young people have been involved in the criminal justice system, but young people suggested to us that media reports can perpetuate the image of the young Hackney troublemaker.

Some young people we interviewed suggested that the police are influenced by this image, and reflected on the role that race seems to play in this problem:

Sometimes the police do assume stuff...they just assume, like, “ah, this person looks dangerous.” ... there was like a white girl who said something bad, and apparently brought in a knife to school, and they never brought in police. But then one time I threatened another student and they brought the police in...the police and the school, the whole system, it’s just messed up, and I feel like that’s why some young people are the way they are... It happened to my friend recently where [the police] were just assuming they were doing something wrong. I feel like that’s where the police go wrong. I’m not saying they’re anything like the people in America, because god forbid that ever happens, touch wood... If you’re trying to help the community, help the area, you shouldn’t just pick out a black – not a black – but you shouldn’t just pick out a person (16 year-old female)

[People my age] don’t like [the police], they hate them...my friend was having an argument with someone, and the person called the police... there was like four to six cars, for one person...bearing in mind he’s a black boy as well, and you’ve got six cars, and they’ve all jumped out on him, pounced on him. He ain’t done nothing wrong. So little little things like that will make people hate the police. It’s going to make people feel a certain type of way, like “rah!” in other words, at that point, I didn’t even feel safe on my doorstep... (19 year-old female)

There was evidence of similar sentiments among younger young people, too. A 13-year old who responded to one of our surveys wrote that “being treated unfairly by the police” was one of the main problems for young people in the area.

A 16 year-old we interviewed was concerned about how stereotyping could affect young people’s opportunities:

I feel like a lot of young people are stereotyped, and people pre-judge them... so that’s why the opportunities that are out there, we don’t get to get them

The most striking comment we received relating to this issue was in response to one of our surveys:

Some people think that my area is a dangerous place with high crime rates but we have talent written all over us. (14 year-old female)

Clearly, more work could be done to highlight that talent, and to help spread more positive images of local young people. Highly aware of how they are perceived, young people could benefit from more encouragement and support, and less pre-judgement.

**Some people think that my area is a dangerous place with high crime rates but we have talent written all over us.**

(14 year-old female)

## 3.6 Lack of work opportunities

Many of the young people we engaged felt that their talents weren't being put to use – lack of jobs or work opportunities was a common complaint. For older young people, this also ties in to the issue of having enough to do. Many activities and youth clubs have an upper age limit, meaning that those who are over 17 or 18 look to work partly to ensure that they have enough to do.

Lack of jobs was most often mentioned by teenagers, during interviews, focus groups and workshops. They frequently spoke about this in terms of feeling that young people aren't given "a chance":

Placements should be more open to giving youth population a chance (comment during workshop)

We need higher employment for young people. Give people with no experience a chance (as above)

There's not many work opportunities – people don't wanna give young people a chance (15 year-old female, written comment during workshop activity)

One 16 year-old that we interviewed spoke about the number of potential employers there are in the area, the issue of distrust, and about work opportunities as something that might keep her in Hackney Wick:

There are a lot of shops...They should be open to employing young people. I think some people just close it off, they're like "no, we don't trust them, they're not old enough, we assume that they're not mature enough". Maybe if they opened up and got to know young people more, they might have a changed impression, which would mean young people can get employed and that...

*Do you think you and your friends will stay in Hackney Wick when you get older? What would keep you here?*

When I'm older, we all want jobs. If there's more job opportunities, then perhaps that would keep me and my friends here.

Another 16 year-old we interviewed spoke in strong terms about the consequences of some young people struggling to find any work:

The way we can tackle the problems with young people is definitely trying to find ways to get them jobs, different things to do...if they're earning money and they're off the streets, then I think it can help in that sense...a job is a job, at the end of the day. People don't care, they just wanna earn money. That's why people are selling weed and selling all those kind of stuff....Before they get into selling and all that, they will try to find a job... I've had people, before they got into it, they were asking me for a job, cos obviously I work... I couldn't really help cos they were young

and there's only so much I can do...that's when they started getting into "trapping" [dealing]...there are boys who are my age that I know that are starting to sell coke... a lot of them do road, a lot of them do what they need to do to survive.

Eagerness to earn money was evident in some of our workshops. One young person wrote on their activity sheet that they wanted to "have a business and earn a lot of money."

A couple of the young people who participated in a focus group spoke about the excitement they felt at first earning their own money:

I remember when I first started working and I was getting my money, yeah...I would work in the holidays so I would work a full week and when I get my money I'd be like "oooooh!" (16 year-old female)

My first pay cheque, I looked at it, it was Christmas day, I was like "oh my gosh"...when I look back on it now, I should slap myself cos it was not a lot of money at all! But it was like "wow", and it felt good! Because it was like "I'm not asking my mum for money any more!" (19 year-old female)

There are many advantages to there being more local, accessible work opportunities for young people – it can increase motivation, give them something productive to do, and divert them from the temptation of illegal money-making.

**People don't  
wanna give  
young people  
a chance.**

(15 year-old female)

## 3.7 Mental wellbeing & issues at school

As mentioned in the previous chapter, it was noticeable that a large number of the primary-age pupils who engaged in our research spoke about parks and green spaces as good places to relax or calm down. Similarly, during one workshop with Year 6 pupils, one young boy suggested that a good thing to add to Hackney Wick would be a new youth club for younger children, “especially if their parents have night shifts”, and “maybe it could have a quiet place to meditate.” Comments such as these suggest that local children are very aware of the importance of mental wellbeing, and that they feel they need things locally to help with this.

A 19-year old who we interviewed spoke passionately about the need for more mental health awareness in the community:

There’s so many vulnerable children – you don’t know what anyone’s going through... there’s this girl who was bade on social media...and she ended up killing herself... you shouldn’t have to feel like you have no-one to talk to... it shouldn’t be that someone has to kill themselves to now know “oh yeah, mental health, everyone needs to know that depression is real”. Oh so because someone kills themselves, mental health is real?...it doesn’t make any sense, why would your friend want to come to you and be like “oh I’ve got depression”, for you to be like “oh you’re crazy, move from me”. That’s what we have to deal with...

They also spoke to us about the value of counselling:

I had counselling...and the thing is, my counsellor was just amazing, she basically just knew everything about me and I felt so comfortable to speak to her, cos it’s like I’m not going to see you tomorrow, I’m going to see you in the next two weeks again, but you can’t judge me, cos at the end of the day this is your job, and I knew that whatever I’m telling her it’s not going to come out. But if you go to your friend, you can have an argument and then tomorrow all your business is on social media, do you know what I’m saying?

Similarly, a 16 year-old suggested to us that young people need more mentors, especially in school:

When I say mentors...we need more people who have experienced the same things as us, so we can talk on a level...a lot of people don’t have older siblings, so they don’t have anyone to look up to, and their parents are always hard on them, so they need that other person to like set the tone. “If you choose to do this, this will happen, if you choose to do this, this will happen.”...I feel like maybe [mentoring or counselling] people should approach schools...if they don’t know them and they don’t go to their school, the children will be more open talking to them

**[Son’s] education has just been like one exclusion after the other**

(parent)

Quite a number of young people suggested to us that schools behave in a way which doesn’t benefit students’ wellbeing. They spoke about pressure, and about teachers not seeming to care:

Right now [schools] are overdoing it – they have to have pressure but only to a certain extent (16 year-old female, comment during workshop)

A lot of the time teachers don’t really try to build a relationship with the student... I feel like 30% of the teachers actually have your best interests at heart, the rest of them couldn’t give a s\*\*\*... a lot of the teachers they don’t even care about you it’s just like “you just need to pass...come to the lesson, shut your mouth, do what you need to do” (19 year-old female, focus group)

I do have this one teacher that talks to me if she thinks there’s something wrong... but a lot of the teachers don’t care they just do it as a job and get out (16 year-old female, focus group)

On a related note, we heard complaints about school exclusions (and their consequences) from a range of different respondents:

That’s why I think a lot of kids get kicked out of school – I feel like teachers have grudges. It’s like they’re trying to get that child in trouble, they’re trying their hardest even if they haven’t done anything. I’ve seen it with loads of teachers. (16 year-old, interview)

[Son’s] education has just been like one exclusion after the other. He’s been out of school more than he’s been in it (Parent, interview)

Loads of my school were kicked out and joined a gang (teenager, verbal comment during workshop)



## 4

# How is the area changing for young people?

A large proportion of the young people we engaged have lived in Hackney Wick for ten years or more, and have seen substantial change in the area during that time.

Many are old enough to talk about the impact of significant and consequential events, such as the 2012 Olympics and the 2011 riots. They see the effects of regeneration efforts and of gentrification, and these processes influence how they feel about their area.

Young people spoke in a nuanced and eloquent manner about their experience of change in Hackney Wick. For ease of navigation we have organised their comments into three separate sections – focused on positives, negatives, and what isn't changing – but in reality, many individual young people covered all three of these things in their discussion of this issue.

## 4.1 Positive experiences of change

A number of those involved in our research spoke positively about how the area seems to have improved and to have been regenerated, particularly because it can help tackle misconceptions and stereotypes about the area. A parent we interviewed was particularly enthusiastic:

In Summer now it's really lively, the regeneration of Hackney has seen what we all call the 'Hoxtonites' – I love it...for me it's brought a really healthy interjection of 'non-hood' to the 'hood'...Hackney Wick, I think, is probably one of the best areas. Like now, because they built Westfield, off the back of that and the Olympic Stadium it's brought a huge new element to the area. I've noticed all the local areas like Well St, Chatsworth Rd, they're all regenerating... One by one the ghetto is going and these new more diverse shops are coming up, and it's lovely. Like, it's really nice that now in Hackney Wick there's a choice of restaurants. We only used to just have one pub at the end of the road!

For this parent, the changes in the area and across Hackney have helped to improve its status, having previously been seen as “the hood” or “the ghetto”.

Renee wrote somewhat similarly in her profile at the start of this report:

I think recent changes have brought a lot of the community together, as there are loads of shops and markets that have opened which allows people from different areas to come and be a part of the Hackney community.

In one focus group we ran with a small group of local teenagers, there was a lot of discussion about how changes to shops and buildings have helped the area. They mentioned “new houses and flats everywhere”, which not only increase housing stock but make the area more “presentable” and “better looking”. We discussed the new Hackney Fashion Walk, just outside of Hackney Wick along Morning Lane. One young person said it's improving the reputation of the area, helping people feel more welcome, and tackling misconceptions. They said that it helps Hackney “look pretty”, and means that people “don't have to go to the West End.” Another young person said that they think local services are improving, such as shops and gyms, and that people providing these services seem to be nicer to young people.

Some of the young people we spoke to were very positive about the influx of new types of people into the area. “D” (19, female) and “P” (16, female) talked about this:

D → The whole of Hackney's changed, man...

For me it's brought a really healthy interjection of 'non-hood' to the 'hood'...

(parent)

P → It's more kind of like...QUOTATION MARKS, “hipsters”. I don't have a problem with hipsters, I feel like it's becoming more urban and modern...

D → Which is good...

P → And I like it, it's like more people are being confident in who they are, and wearing what they want to wear...

D → Being who they want to be...

P → Yeah like being them...

Clearly, “P” and “D” associated “hipsters” with authenticity and individuality, which they felt positively about. “Hipsters” also arose in conversation with a 13 year-old male that we interviewed, and he was also positive:

I view them positively, they're doing something creative with their life

“D” also spoke at length about one particular new restaurant, and what it says about how Hackney is changing for the better:

Basically, in other words, I feel like Hackney has become a better place. Even though they're trying to get all the teens out...which is bad because it's people's homes...But now, this is one of the best things that I could honestly say...by Morning Lane Tesco, they've opened this vegan restaurant. So, imagine, there was a queue for this place. Do you know why that's good? For my whole entire life being in Hackney I've never seen one vegetarian place, one vegan place, for people to eat. Okay, there are people in this world that do not like eating animals, yeah, it's weird because animals taste good, but... you need to

do things to make people feel comfortable...the fact they can open a vegan shop is amazing, cos I've never seen it before... We're living in a place where not everyone's needs are met, and now, for the vegans, their needs are met...

We discussed the impact of the Olympics with a lot of the young people we engaged, and many of them were complimentary. "P" and "D", for instance:

*To what extent do you think the Olympics changed the area?*

D → I feel like it changed it for the better.

P → Yeah I feel like it made it a bit more modern. And I really like the little seating areas, like by the canal.

D → It's a chilling area now, it's well-presented. Like, I'm not gonna lie, Hackney was a s\*\*\*hole 5 years ago, like let's be real now...it hasn't really brought any problems...there's chilling areas, no-one's telling you to go London fields or Victoria park, you even have another option, of the Olympic Park, where you can chill, they've got events going on...they've just given you more things to do, more activities to do, in Hackney

P → Me and [friend] will go there to chill, take Snaps, and people will be like "oh my god, where are you? You guys go to nice places!" And I'll be like "I'm round the corner from my house! You don't even know!"

D → We probably have more tourists coming in [now]...it's made it better, it's brought more people in the area...

Another 16 year-old female we interviewed was also positive, and – a bit like "D" with her vegan cafe – spoke about how the Olympics had encouraged new shops into the area:

Yeah, because then a lot of people wouldn't have wanted to open shops. You would open in a shop in a place you know business will be popping... people are understanding that Hackney Wick is getting there – getting more known, more people are coming, it's getting a bit more people coming in.

The 13 year-old male we interviewed spoke about a number of benefits of the Olympics:

*Do you remember the Olympics? Do you think your area has changed since the Olympics and in what way?*

Yeah, a lot more infrastructure. A lot more tourists, a lot more sights, like...now...before the Olympics there was no Westfield and stuff and now it's just on the outside of Hackney, which is wonderful. More people come over.

Regeneration, new types of people, new types of shop, and the impact of the Olympics – the positives of all these changes have been noticed by young people. They have also noticed the downsides, however, both to these and other forms of change.

**People will be like 'oh my god, where are you? You guys go to nice places!' And I'll be like 'I'm round the corner from my house! You don't even know!'**

(16 year-old female)

## 4.2 Negative experiences of change

Far from all the comments we heard about change in the area were positive – negative comments were more common. Some young people feel they're being left out by what's happening in the area, or at least that they aren't benefitting from it. When speaking more negatively about change, young people tended to focus on one or more of three related issues: affordability, belonging and disempowerment.

### Affordability

The local area is getting more expensive, and young people are aware of it. New shops often mean higher prices. As one 15 year-old put it simply, “**everything is more expensive here now**”. During a workshop with teenagers, one spoke less positively about the vegan shop that “D” praised. She said that it does add to the local economy, but that it seems designed more for new residents than for longer-term residents, and pointed out that it's very expensive:

**For a burger it's £7, and that's not even including the chips...they should bring more healthy shops, but bring them at an affordable price for everybody**

Some suggested that the changes are benefitting the wealthy more than anyone else, particularly when it comes to local shops:

**They kinda are leaving us behind... because they're building all these things, making everything more expensive, so that the people who can't afford it, they have nowhere to go... a lot of people are being left behind, if you're not rich, if you're not middle class or above that, the government ain't really helping you (16 year-old female, interview)**

**The prices must have gone up, cos it's literally right next to the Olympic park. I guess if you're rich, then lucky you, but the majority of us who live in Hackney is not so rich (16 year-old female, interview)**

**There are lots of shops that are useful...they're knocking them down to put in cafes that sell the same thing... coffees for £3 (19 year-old female, interview)**

**Some shops...some really good shops being knocked down...well being closed down to put new shops. For example, I miss Gregg's. I used to go there every day (11 year-old female, focus group)**

The 19 year-old quoted above was clear that she didn't feel the changes are benefitting young people:

**They're just about bringing in clothing shops, so it ain't benefitting us... it ain't helping young people, it's just helping...whoever owns the property...**

A teenager who took part in a workshop wrote a clear statement of the change they wanted in the area:

### Add things more accessible to the population

There was a trend for young people to talk about new shops and services being inaccessible for those who have grown up in the area, feeling they're catering more for newer, wealthier residents.

Some young people were very aware that they may not be able to afford to stay in the area:

**They're doing up Hackney...we're never gonna be able to own a house... There are rich people moving in buying houses...people will have to move out, no young person will own a house (16 year-old male, focus group)**

**See us young people, our generation? We're looking for houses in Essex, we're looking for houses in different places. Cos in London there's no places to live, you cannot get into a place in London. (17 year-old male, focus group)**

When you're struggling to afford the area you've grown up in, it can undermine your sense of belonging – a large number of young people spoke about this problem.

### Belonging

The changes that young people have experienced in Hackney Wick have also affected their sense of belonging. In many cases, they suggested that they feel left out, and that the area now feels less familiar. A 17 year-old female said she feels that young people and longer term residents “**don't belong any more**”, especially because of changes to local places which they “**would now never step foot in**”.

Others made similar points:

**Cos of all the changes are happening I feel like they're leaving young people out (16 year-old female, interview)**

**The area is not really ours anymore (17 year-old female, focus group)**

**Hackney is no longer the Hackney I grew up in (15 year-old male, workshop)**

In one interview we undertook with a sixteen-year-old girl, she spoke at length about this issue:

### *What are the biggest problems in Hackney Wick?*

**There's a lot of gentrification. So young people feel a bit uncomfortable to be around the shops that are newly built. There are cafes and whatnot, it's a bit**



uncomfortable to be around. They look at you like “what you doing?”

*Young people feel uncomfortable in Hackney Wick?*

Yeah, around those newly-built parts. Those newly-built shops...

*How do you feel about the “hipsters”? [She had used the term in a previous response]*

I think they’re cool... but I don’t like when people look on me in a certain way, like “ah she’s wearing a big puffy jacket and she’s standing outside the shop...” Why you looking on me like that? They see a young person in the area and they’re like “oh my God!” [in a suspicious voice!] That’s the only part that I don’t really like about it. Because I kinda have more positive looks on them, like “you look cool!”, and they look on me like “you look like you’re a troublemaker!”

Young people quite often spoke about this social distance between themselves and newer residents, and the lack of integration between the creative community and longer-term residents, including young people. One 15 year-old mentioned during a workshop that popular places like the local Tesco and Victoria Park have changed in character because of new residents coming in, and said that she “*doesn’t really feel part of it.*”

A few young people suggested that the sense of community in the area is being undermined, and that it’s becoming more divided:

*The atmosphere’s changed...there’s more divisions between people (15 year-old male, workshop)*

*Everyone used to get along (12 year-old male, workshop)*

*As we get older, the community is going down... everyone has their own clique, it’s kind of like high school. That’s why there isn’t much of a community (16 year-old female, interview)*

Some parents’ sense of belonging and community has also been eroded. One Family Liaison Officer that we spoke to, who works for a local school, said many parents “*feel that the area is for someone else other than the people who have lived here for a long time.*” A parent we interviewed said that, having liked the “*community feel*” in Hackney Wick, it’s now “*really gone*”.

**Because they’re building all these things, making everything more expensive, so that the people who can’t afford it, they have nowhere to go**

*(16 year-old female)*

## Disempowerment

When combined, problems with affordability and belonging can lead to a profound sense of disempowerment, and to a feeling that people in the area are not being listened to or thought about.

One 19 year-old we interviewed was particularly passionate about the need for young people to have more of a say:

*I personally think, in order for the government to actually listen, or for them to realise that this is getting out of hand, another riot needs to happen. It sounds so bad to say, but I feel like the riots were a wake-up call that you need to listen to people...it’s getting worse and worse every day... no-one has a say any more... nothing’s getting done.*

A 15 year-old expressed a somewhat similar sentiment:

*The government need to actually talk to people, to get a better understanding of the issues.*

This feeling was also evident among younger children. When we asked a group of Year Six students if they feel that young people are listened to when decisions

# In order for the government to actually listen, or for them to realise that this is getting out of hand, another riot needs to happen.

(19 year-old female)

are made about the area, only 4 out of 30 said they do.

A parent spoke somewhat dejectedly about not feeling listened to:

I think a lot of Londoners as a whole don't feel very listened to any more. We just feel like people from outside London, like from other countries, adore London...but we don't feel very appreciated as Londoners

She stressed the disempowerment felt by local young people:

I would encourage more youth ambassadors to be voices for this area...because kids I don't think have very much faith in the system...I'd give them more voice.

She also felt strongly that the Olympics had not really benefitted the local community:

*How much do you think the Olympics has changed the area?*

Nothing, it's done nothing for our family... you wouldn't have known in Hackney Wick that there even was an Olympics. They deliberately manifested it all to be in Stratford because they wanted to promote Westfield and blah blah blah...They made out "oh it was gonna be this, it was gonna be that"... I think a lot of local people felt cheated by it. But then it's a government, and this is a local area which feels very cheated by the government anyway...I think it was

over-hyped and yeah, it's done very well for what they needed it to do, but it didn't benefit our community at all.

Clearly, many of those we engaged with felt that the changes in Hackney Wick are not very inclusive, and do not benefit everyone in the local community.

We spoke with the Mayor of Hackney, Philip Glanville, about the change that Hackney Wick is experiencing, and he focused on the importance of inclusion, especially for young people:

I think that Hackney Wick's going through a lot of change – there's regeneration happening, there's new transport links and development. What concerns me is all throughout that change people feeling that stuff is happening for them, and that's especially acute for young people. You're seeing all the investment in the Olympics which a lot of people in the Wick can see. I know there's concern about making sure those jobs and opportunities that are coming there – like BT Sport, Loughborough University, UCL – that those are being accessed by people from Hackney Wick, not even just East London. A lot of the measures of success in this area are around improving East London, but I know Hackney Wick & Homerton...it's important that we make sure that people from there get those opportunities as well.

Through all the change, there is a risk that local young people feel that things are happening to them, rather than for them – more could be done to ensure that they are involved and their needs are considered.

## 4.3 What isn't changing?

Portrayals of transformation in areas like Hackney Wick can sometimes be melodramatic, as if the entire place has been overhauled and entirely reconstructed. Many of the young people were keen to point out the things that aren't changing, and suggested that some of the changes have been superficial.

One young person (a 15 year-old female) said that “everything is more expensive here” despite the fact that “the actual community hasn't changed – it's still poor.” She said that things like the Olympic Park and Westfield are “nice things on the surface” but that the “fundamentals haven't changed” in the local area, in terms of deprivation, poor housing, and so on – the entrenched problems which were addressed in the previous chapter. A 16 year-old male echoed this, saying that he feels changes in the area are just “covering bad with nice clothing.”

Similarly, a 17 year-old who took part in a focus group said that those leading change in the area seem to be “prioritising richer people” and the “upper class”, because existing housing and estates are not being renovated, despite the money coming into the area.

Lastly, a 19 year-old argued that the lives of young people aren't changing much. They face similar issues, and can end up involved in similar problems, such as drug dealing. She had a very interesting

response during the focus group in which another young person said the area “isn't ours anymore” – she said: “When was it ever ours, though?” She suggested that the disempowerment young people now feel due to gentrification is not a new thing – implying that young people may always have been disempowered, just by different forces, and perhaps have rarely felt listened to.

Clearly, Hackney Wick is changing in many respects, but it is also clear that the problems faced by young people are not just evaporating. There is a danger that these deep-rooted issues could be marginalised if there is an overwhelming focus on transformation and change.

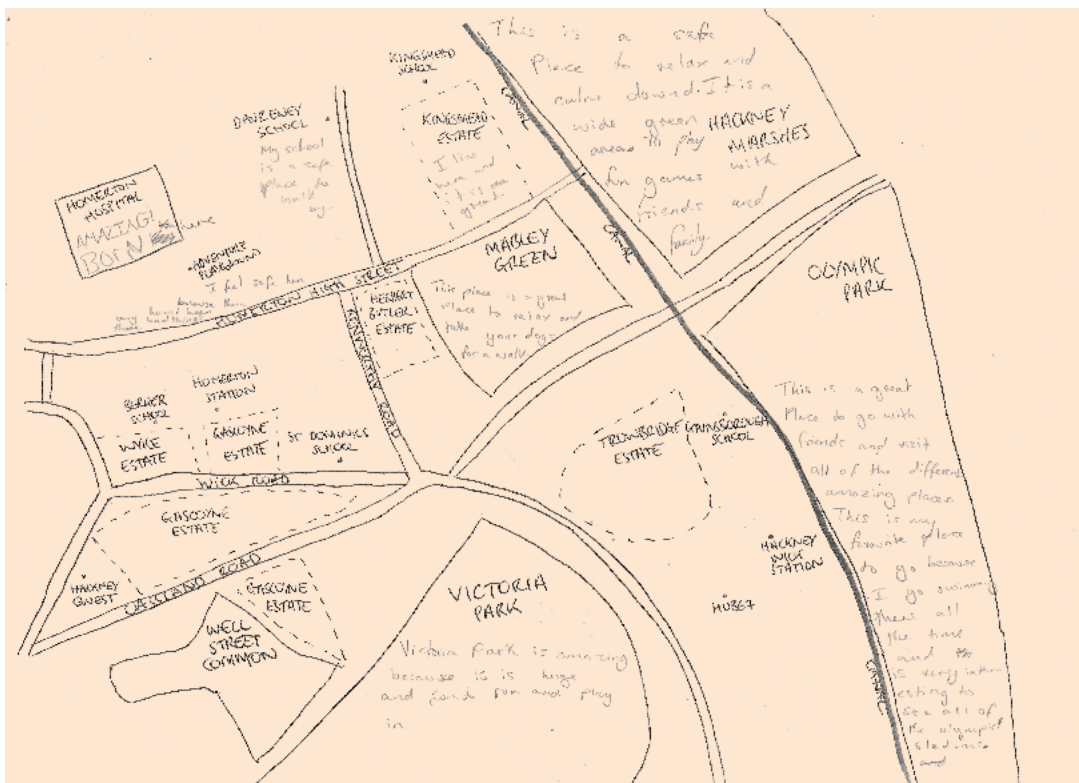
A primary-age young person wrote a fascinating comment on Victoria Park during the map annotation exercise – he wrote “good because it never changes.” There are some things young people like not to change.

**Everything is more expensive here...the actual community hasn't changed – it's still poor**

(15 year-old female)

MY AREA IS CALLED: Hassett Road MY POSTCODE IS: E9 5SN

| ☺ THINGS I LIKE ABOUT MY AREA ☺                       | ☹ THINGS I DON'T LIKE ABOUT MY AREA ☹   | THINGS THAT I WOULD CHANGE IF I WAS THE BOSS OF MY AREA   |
|---|---|---|
| That its very peaceful                                | Theres sometimes gangs that make alot of noise.                                     | I want people to stop littering because it makes the area look bad.   |
| I have alot of friends near me, &                     | Theres <del>to</del> sometimes litter on the floor.                                 | I want gangs to stop bullying because it would effect the people that are being bullied <del>in a bad way</del> |
| I have shops close by that sells my favourite things. | People knock on my door then run away.  | Stop gangs with weapons.  |
| I have local parks near by.                           | People take my belongings.  |   |
|   | I hate it when workers make too much noise in the mornings when im trying to sleep. |   |
|   |   |   |
|   |   |   |



## 5

# What do young people want to see in the area?

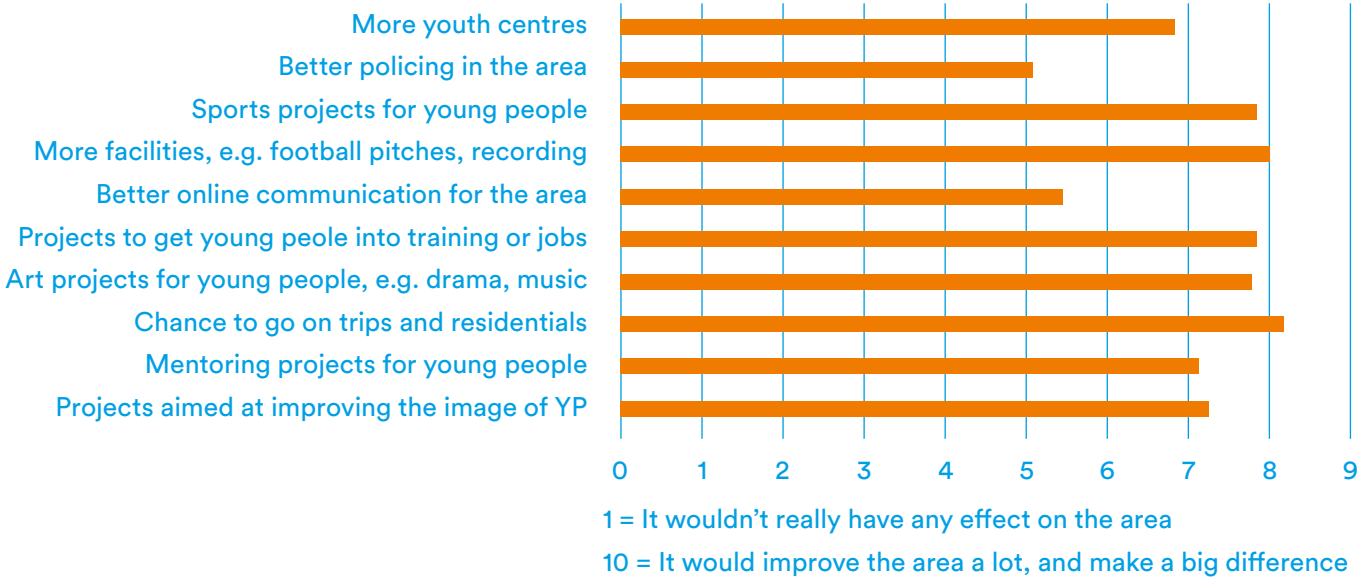
One of the main focuses of our research was finding out what young people would like to see in the area, and what ideas they have for change.

Given the change that Hackney Wick is currently experiencing, it's more important than ever to ensure that young people's views and ideas have an influence over the way that the area develops. As noted in the introduction, over a third of Hackney Wick is aged 25 or under, so it is vital that the interests and concerns of young people are recognised.

If regeneration projects in Hackney Wick are to be successful, they must not alienate local young people. Informing and involving young people is essential if change is not to feel imposed from above or to be resented.

One of our survey questions asked how much of a positive impact a range of measures would have (the options were chosen by young people):

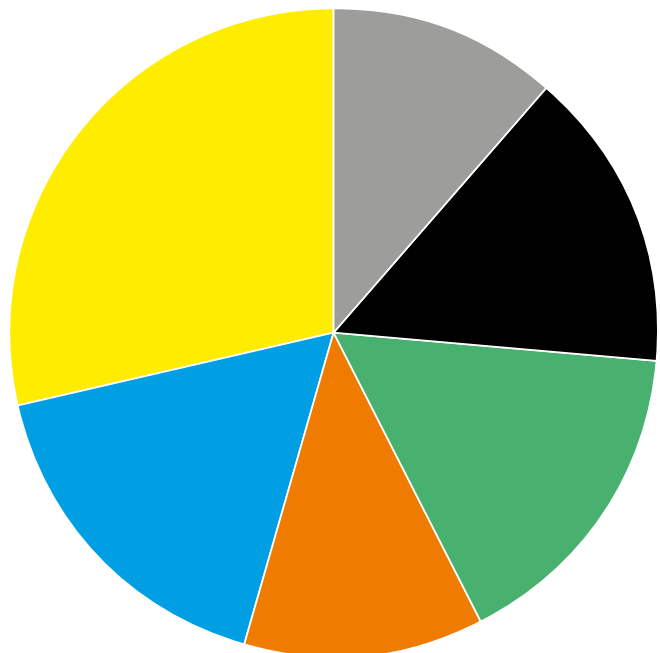
Shown below are average ratings from our respondents  
On a scale of 1-10, how much would these things improve your area for young people?



We also ran a workshop activity with 16 small groups of young people aged 8-17 in three different settings, in which they were given “£100” to allocate to different activities. The average allocations for each type of activity were:

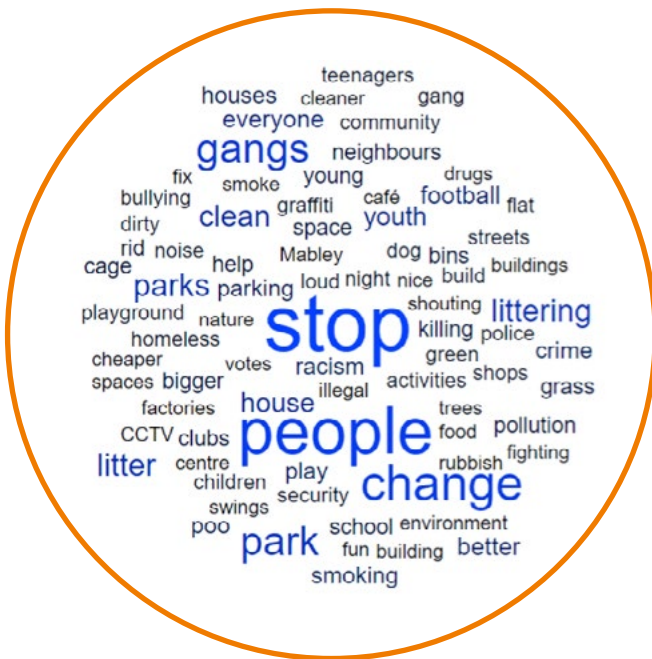
### Budget allocation activity – averages

- Improved safety for YP, 27.6
- Trips & residentials, 16.3
- Sport projects, 15.4
- Drama projects, 14.5
- Art projects, 11.8
- Music projects, 11.3



## 5.1 Tackling problems

The wordcloud below was generated by inputting everything that every young person wrote when filling in the “Things I would like to change” column of the activity sheet, and all of the answers young people gave in workshops to questions such as “What would you change in your area?” In all, this includes roughly 200 children and young people, aged between 8 and 19. The bigger the word, the more often it was mentioned:



As all of this data suggests, many young people’s ideas for change relate to tackling the problems that were discussed earlier in this report – issues such as safety, gangs, togetherness and opportunities. In addition, many young people expressed a need for more trips or residentials, for more or improved facilities and activities, and also suggested the benefits of a new youth club in the area.

Many ideas for change have already been discussed earlier in this report, as young people frequently suggested changes to address the problems they identified: they want improved housing, a better local environment, cheaper things, and a better image for young people, for instance. Described below are the more specific or detailed ideas for change that young people suggested to address the issues they face in the area.

### Safety

Making the area safer was often seen as an urgent need, as the results of the budget allocation exercise suggest. Two Primary-age young people made particularly strong comments on this point:

**We have to make it safe before we can do anything else (Workshop comment)**

**Not enough money is invested in safety (Activity sheet comment)**

A 13 year-old we interviewed also thought of safety first when asked about changes he would make to improve life for local young people:

**I don’t even know... what would I do? Probably get the safety up higher**

During a workshop with a Year 6 group, young people spoke particularly about wanting to tackle crime and violence when asked about the changes they’d like to see:

**Stop crime in my area – young children get influenced**

**Reduce fights and violence – people should be patient with each other**

A number of young people suggested security measures when asked what they would change:

**High-tech security (Workshop comment)**

**Get security cameras around the place (Activity sheet comment)**

**Add security, to prevent crimes (As above)**

**CCTV for safety (As above)**

**Could add security, e.g. ID cards for the estates (Year 6 workshop comment)**

**More CCTV (Focus group comment)**

As mentioned in Chapter 3, many young people do not feel safe in Hackney Wick, so measures to improve their security – and their feeling of security – are a pressing need.

## Gangs

Some young people suggested security measures specifically to address gang problems:

I would change the gates and have security so gangs wouldn't get in (Comment on activity sheet)

I would like to get rid of the gangs like maybe have police around send them away (As above)

Put guards around to look out for gangs in the area causing trouble (As above)

A very large number of young people wrote on their activity sheets that they wanted to “get rid of gangs”, or words to that effect – hence the size of the word “gangs” in the wordcloud above. During workshops, young people also spoke about wanting to tackle related problems, such as grooming, killings, and drugs.

There is a clear desire among young people for gang issues to be addressed, but there is pessimism among some about the possibility of addressing them effectively, as we mentioned in Chapter 3. One 16 year-old we interviewed expressed this pessimism particularly clearly:

*How much do you think there is that organisations can actually do to try to address young people's problems, like gangs, drugs, or knife crime?*

You can address it all you want but it's not gonna stop... Like there was these boys I know from when they were younger and they were like...nerd boys. But now they're trying to be bad, they're acting like they're about that life. So I dunno... I don't think it can be stopped.

Despite her pessimism, the same 16 year-old did have ideas about how intelligent use of social media could perhaps help tackle gang-related issues in the area:

If social media is the thing that they [those involved in gangs] use, then we need to find a way to be on the social media, the stuff that they use, to get their attention, if you know what I mean. Like nowadays no-one's really on Facebook, everyone's on Instagram, Snapchat...So if we have to be on Instagram constantly, 24/7, or Snapchat 24/7, to get attention from these types of people, then I feel like... we have to just think about young people. Sometimes where organisations go wrong when it comes to trying to help the youth, they think about it from their point of view, they think “oh, I'll just drop a couple of flyers here and there, I'll try to do a meeting...” and it's just like, no, it doesn't work well. So I feel like we need to think about everybody in general, and what would catch – I don't know – a roadman's attention. What

would catch a pretty girl's attention, what would catch a girl who's going through problems, a boy that's going through problems? That's how we need to think about it...

Clearly, a number of different factors are involved in gang involvement – as discussed earlier in this report – and such an entrenched issue could only ever be addressed over the long term through multifaceted initiatives. It also seems clear, however, that improvements in the quality of life experienced by young people could potentially make a difference to the gang problem, and so all of the changes suggested by young people could have an impact.

## Community togetherness

Particularly when speaking about the changes they are noticing in Hackney Wick, many young people suggested that the area is somewhat divided, and that community togetherness may have declined. As more new residents come into the area, with a greater diversity of lifestyles, the importance of measures to improve social cohesion grows. As mentioned in Chapter 4, some young people feel that newer residents, such as those from the creative community, look on them with suspicion. Initiatives to tackle this suspicion and encourage interaction would be welcome.

When talking about ideas to bring people together, there was an interesting tendency among some young people to focus on age, as much as lifestyle or culture:

*Lack of communication is a problem for young people. Not just within the youth, but with the elders too... There could be more interaction between the elders and the youngsters, so that there's no miscommunications. (16 year-old female, interview)*

*We're really segregated in terms of age groups... we don't understand each other's worlds... we need more projects to bring people together and bridge the gaps (15 year-old female, focus group)*

The idea of age-based “segregation” somewhat tallies with the problem of Primary-age children often expressing fear towards teenagers, and seeming to equate them with gangsters. There appears to be a clear need for projects which bring together young people of different ages.



## Opportunities

In Chapter 3, we mentioned how young people spoke in broad terms about a lack of opportunities in the area, and pointed out the consequences of this, especially there being more young people “on the road”. Many also said that they felt young people aren’t given a chance in the job market, and spoke about how an increase in work opportunities could have a big effect.

This was reflected in the survey results above – “Projects to help young people into training or jobs” was highly rated, with an average score of 7.6/10 for the extent to which it would improve the area for young people.

Interviewees spoke about the benefits of an increase in work opportunities:

The Hackney market that used to be here, that was huge, and it used to bring so many people to the area each week, like Dagenham market does now. That would be huge, that would be something that could encourage the kids. Something like that, [son] and his mates could get a stall together, sort of have a little business. (Parent)

I’m kinda thinking, yeah, the way we can tackle the problems with young people is definitely trying to find ways to get them jobs, different things to do... if we try to do things where it’s beneficial to them and they’re earning money and they’re off the streets, then I think we can help. (16 year-old female)

If many of the problems that young people face stem from a lack of things to do and from a lack of legitimate means to earn money, an increase in local work opportunities could make a significant difference to their lives in the local area.

**We’re really segregated  
in terms of age groups...  
we don’t understand each  
other’s worlds...**

(15 year-old female)

## 5.2 Trips, activities, facilities & clubs

As well as emphasising the need for problems to be addressed, participants in our research also expressed a variety of ideas for positive change in the area, which would help improve life for local young people. Three areas of improvement were particularly prominent in our data: more opportunities for trips or residential, more or improved facilities, and a new local youth club.

### Trips & residential

In the results of both the survey and the budget allocation activity, trips and residential were very popular among the young people we engaged. Trips and residential was the option in the survey which was deemed to have the most positive impact on young people, and in the budget allocation exercise it received the second-biggest slice of the budget, on average – second only to improving safety.

One of the 16 year-olds that we interviewed suggested trips and residential when we asked her what would benefit local young people. She reflected on her own experience when answering:

**More courses and residential. It was nice to have time away, cos it was kind of in the country. It was like, very green. More things like that for young people would be good.**

As highlighted in Chapter 2, local young people value the green space in their area, but there is clearly something different about getting out into “the country”. The focus on having “time away” could also tie in with the concern for mental wellbeing which many young people expressed – trips and residential help take young people get out of their usual environment in a way which can be beneficial to mental health.

When explaining why they had allocated a substantial chunk of their budget to trips and residential during a workshop, one local teenager made an important point:

**Some parents don't have time to take their children, so many kids have never been away**

Many parents in the area may not have the time or resources to take their children away, meaning that some local young people will never have left London. Whereas sport, music and other activities are obtainable for all to at least some extent, opportunities for trips or residential are less common.

### New or improved activities & facilities

In the survey results above, the second highest rated improvement to the area was “more facilities”, and different types of activity were popular in both the survey and the budget allocation exercise – sports activities especially.

In some cases, an increase in activities was linked to a decrease in other problems. During one workshop in a primary school, for instance, one young person suggested:

**Activities for teenagers, partly to stop fights around the estate**

As mentioned in Chapter 3, young people often argued that having more to do in the local area would “keep young people off the streets”, in a way which could help solve other issues.

A range of different new activities and facilities were suggested during our research. The focus was often on local, accessible places which would bring people together. During one interview, for example, one 16 year-old spoke at length about the many benefits that could come as a result of opening a kids’ play centre in Hackney Wick:

**There are lot of sites or buildings that are good-for-nothing. They're just there for the sake of being there. What if something was done to that?... Why can't like a Kidsmania get opened there? That's bringing children into Hackney Wick. People can mingle there, make new friends in Hackney Wick, it'll become more of like a social spot. I know Kidsmania is like for young, young ones, but if a Kidsmania was to open now, and then the younger children will go, they'll make friends in the area, and then when they grow older they'll have friends in the area cos they met at Kidsmania... and also, parents – when kids bond, parents bond. So they can have more of a communication and start talking. And if they have older children... everyone just starts communicating.**

This young person clearly felt that there was a lack of communal “hubs” in Hackney Wick, either for young people or parents, and that something like Kidsmania – although primarily providing play – could also help improve cohesion and togetherness in the local community. A 19 year-old we spoke to suggested that a trampolining centre for children could be “**very ideal for Hackney Wick**”, for similar reasons.

Others suggested things which could make the most of what there already is in Hackney Wick, or which could be added with relative ease:

Maybe a children's canoeing class could help the area. I'm trying to think about what we have in Hackney Wick, and what we can get young people involved with. (16 year-old, interview)

If there was a bike track here, [Son] would be on it every day, somewhere that he could go and do stuff (Parent, interview)

Making the most of existing assets also came up during a workshop with a teenage youth group – the group were discussing the benefits of local facilities like football cages, but one participant emphasised the need for structured activities in such places. He said that “a cage is a cage”, and that they can be misused without organised activities. In his own experience, he felt his local cage was best-used when “Kickz” sessions happened in it, and that since those sessions stopped the cage was less safe, and dominated by “olders”.

This ties in closely with what many other young people spoke about – not just that having new or more facilities would be good, but that existing facilities could be improved, as mentioned in Chapter 2. A large number of comments on the activity sheets mentioned either problems with existing facilities, or improvements that could be made:

I would change the fish park because the zip wire is broken and is dangerous

I would fix the floor in the football pitch, make it out a more smooth material. Or cover it in fake grass.

I would fix the park and make it better

More play areas (secure/safe/protected)

I would make the playground cleaner

Local young people greatly appreciate the parks, playgrounds and cages in the area, but they are also understandably concerned that these facilities are safe, clean, well-maintained. Neighbourhood and estate-based play areas and cages are often the most well-used facilities there are, so their quality can make a real difference to local young people. A brief story illustrates this well: a few weeks after running a workshop in one of the local primaries, one of the participants yelled across the street to our project leader, Luke, and ran up to him. He wanted to tell Luke that the goals in his local cage – which he'd said were broken during the workshop – were now fixed, so the cage was better now, and he was clearly delighted by this.

It was not just on the activity sheets that this issue arose, but during most of the different engagement exercises we ran. Comments included:

They should refurbish the outdoor gyms for young people, to encourage active lifestyles (Workshop comment)

Make park more interesting, especially for under-9s (Workshop comment)

They need to improve the play areas and have better stuff here (Comment during walking tour of Wick)

Why wouldn't you just put a swing up? The park on our road for the kids is dead, there's nothing in it, there's like some dilapidated seesaw and a dilapidated climbing frame, and that's it. (Parent, interview)

In the local playground the swings are rusty & broken, the benches broken up (Workshop comment)

**Why wouldn't you just put a swing up? The park on our road for the kids is dead, there's nothing in it, there's like some dilapidated seesaw and a dilapidated climbing frame, and that's it.**

(parent)

These are facilities which local children spend lots of time in – every day, in many cases – so their maintenance and improvement has a significant impact on their lives.

## Youth clubs

The different benefits that would come from having more youth clubs in the area was frequently mentioned by young people. Alongside the obvious benefit of increasing activities for young people, there was also mention of gang prevention, safety, and bringing people together. On activity sheets, comments in the “Changes I would make” column included:

Add more youth centres

More youth clubs

Community youth centre

Add more youth clubs to stop gangs

As mentioned in Chapter 3, one primary-age young person interestingly suggested a youth club especially for younger children whose parents worked night shifts, and suggested it could include meditation sessions.

Interviewees spoke at length about how a new youth club could help Hackney Wick:

I would have a vibrant centre, that they [young people] could all come to. A big centre, where postcode nonsense wasn't tolerated and rules were sort of set...there's loads of these little in-area projects, but kids need more than that. These youth

places do an amazing job, but they're getting the same thing from all of them and there's no drop-in centre, as such. If I had my dream world I'd have a big building, with outdoor facilities like bike stuff... I would have learning facilities in it, counselling rooms. A dream youth centre, as such. (Parent)

I'm not sure if there's a youth club round there... but maybe if there was a youth club, the young people that live in Hackney Wick can all come together. Cos Hackney Wick is so... I don't know the word... people don't really talk that much in the neighbourhood. My friend didn't even know that her neighbour was her age. So maybe if there was more youth clubs or like a youth gathering that happened there, young people can get to know each other and actually know who lives in their neighbourhood...a youth club [could] make people feel safe in the area. (16 year-old female)

It seems that there is a demand for a youth club because it could bring together different young people in a structured environment, as well as providing support and opportunities for individuals.

During one workshop with local teenagers, they said that work could be done to make sure that existing youth clubs can serve their purpose. Equipment and activities could be improved, and there could be measures to stop gangs coming in and changing the nature of the clubs. As with local facilities more widely, the value of youth clubs to young people heightens the importance of their maintenance and quality.

As all of these examples show, our respondents felt that new or improved facilities could play a big part in tackling the problems outlined in Chapter 3, as well as providing enjoyment and fun for local young people.

**Maybe if there was a youth club, the young people that live in Hackney Wick can all come together.**

(16 year-old female)



# Recommendations for policy-makers

These eight recommendations are based on the research presented here, as well as on consultation with the Hackney Wick Youth Voice Panel, local youth organisations, and local school staff.

Examples are provided to give an indication of specific concrete actions which would contribute towards the general recommendations: they are not intended to be comprehensive, but to act as suggestions to prompt wider conversation and thought about how these recommendations could be taken up and pursued.

Although our research found that there is much in Hackney Wick which young people love, we also gained insight into the fear, anger, resignation and resentment that is caused by the issues that local young people face. The recommendations presented here are designed to address these pressing issues.

# 1

## Young people in Hackney Wick must have a voice in the changes affecting the area – change must be inclusive if it is not to be resented

**Explanation:** There were some positive comments about changes in the area, but many young people suggested that recent changes have undermined their sense of belonging, reduced the affordability of the area, and left them feeling disempowered. Young people mentioned feeling “left behind” by change in the area, and one young person said that there needs to be “a wake-up call that you need to listen to people”, because she didn’t feel young people have much of a voice in what is happening. Given that over a third of residents in Hackney Wick are 25 or under, it is particularly important for them to be recognised as significant stakeholders in the area. There’s a danger that feelings of resentment could outweigh feelings of pride in the area if young people and other local residents feel excluded from its benefits. Young people need to know the changes which are definitely happening, so that they feel informed, and they need to know which changes they can have a say in, so that they feel involved.

**Example:** Consultation on plans for the area needs to involve young people directly. Workshops could take place in schools and youth centres, for instance. The onus is on those who are making changes in the area to ensure that young people are involved as much as possible, and to think creatively about methods of consultation which will appeal to young people, rather than relying on young people to attend formal consultation events which may not be well-publicised and which may not interest them.

# 2

## Young people in Hackney Wick need local employers to give them a chance

**Explanation:** Many young people suggested that there’s a lack of work opportunities for them in the local area. The phrase they often used was wanting to be given “a chance”. The nature of the work seemed less significant than just getting a start in employment – as one young person put it, “a job is a job”. Young people are keen to begin earning their own money, and so opportunities to make money legitimately are vital. We heard from both young people and parents about how easy it is to get involved in drug-running in the local area – it is highly concerning if illegitimate money-making is a lot easier to do than legitimate money-making. If regeneration efforts in the area are to benefit local people, they have to include substantial employment opportunities for young people. If this does not happen, there is a risk of “two worlds” in Hackney Wick: new residents and those commuting into the area who benefit from the new jobs, and longer-term residents and local young people who do not.

**Example:** Major local employers such as HereEast or Hackney Fashion Walk businesses could engage in more pro-active outreach work, in schools and youth organisations for instance, and could provide specific opportunities ring-fenced for young people from the local area. Local employers could also play a role in providing employability support for local young people.

# 3

## Young people in Hackney Wick need good local facilities

**Explanation:** Young people often identified facilities such as sports cages and playgrounds as their favourite things in the area, and proximity was often key to this – they said that they like the cage “outside my house”, or the playground “close to where I live”. But there were also many complaints about the condition of these facilities – young people often mentioned broken goals or dilapidated old equipment. Given that these facilities are often used every single day, their quality makes a real difference to young lives. There is a particular lack of good-quality facilities of this type to the East of the A12, in the Trowbridge area. Some young people suggested there should be more organised activities and sessions in these facilities, to help young people make the most of them and help to ensure they are accessible by all, rather than being dominated by older young people who may intimidate others.

**Example:** The disused sports cage behind the Old Baths has been a wasted facility for a long time, but wouldn’t need too much work to become fit for purpose. It would be well-used if renovated, as there isn’t much else for young people in the vicinity. A sports club or youth organisation could run informal sports sessions in this facility. Similarly, the Old Baths has long since ceased to be a community facility, but is ideally positioned to become one once more. The area of Hackney Wick East of the A12 is crying out for a large, prominent community-serving building, particularly if Hackney Wick is to acquire a new town centre.

# 4

## Young people in Hackney Wick are affected greatly by the gang issue in the area – it needs to be addressed intelligently and sensitively

**Explanation:** Young people in Hackney Wick often feel unsafe, and this is very frequently linked to gang issues. It was a common complaint that assets in the area such as parks, playgrounds or cages are being “ruined” by gangs. Primary-age children sometimes spoke about gangs and about teenagers as if they are the same thing – there is a lot of fear of older young people. This intimidation needs to be tackled, and children need help to realise that only a small number of teenagers are involved in gangs, so it is not in any way inevitable for them. There also needs to be recognition that the causes of gang involvement are complex (“there are so many levels to young people”), and cannot be separated from other issues raised in this research: deprivation, lack of work opportunities, lack of enough to do, school exclusions and declining affordability, for instance, all play a part.

**Example:** The local gangs unit could engage with schools, youth organisations and grassroots community groups to exchange knowledge and understanding about local gang activity. Myth-busting work led by local experts could help tackle some of the misinformation which exacerbates fear of gangs. Strong teenaged role models could help set alternative examples for primary-age children. Effectively addressing this problem will also require much broader work, however, to tackle the wider issues faced by young people in the area.



# 5

## Hackney Wick's divisions need to be addressed – young people suggested it can be divided by culture, lifestyle and age

**Explanation:** Though they expressed positive feelings towards “hipsters” and creatives in the area, some young people suggested that they feel pre-judged by newer residents – looked upon like they are troublemakers. The word “segregation” was used by one young person to describe the divisions between people of different age-groups in the area. As well as primary-age children being intimidated by teenagers, there is a lack of interaction between young people and older people. More could be done to encourage and facilitate positive interactions between young people and others in the community.

**Example:** Successful volunteer-led work has been done in Hackney Wick to help older people develop their digital skills. If groups of young people were to get involved in this, it could be a good way to promote more intergenerational understanding. Similarly, if local creative businesses could provide opportunities for young people, it could go a long way towards breaking down barriers between them.

# 6

## Young people in Hackney Wick need affordable provision

**Explanation:** Hackney Wick is becoming more expensive. Young people are aware of this, and many of them spoke about wanting things to be cheaper. When talking about what they like most in the area, it was very common for them to mention things being free or cheap – food places, parks, and activities were praised for being enjoyable at a low cost. Chicken and chip shops were often praised for their cheapness, whilst healthier places were criticised for their expensive prices. Particularly given the striking child poverty statistics for the area, it's essential for events, activities and other provisions to be inexpensive if they are to be inclusive, and to benefit all in the community. If new shops and markets are expensive, this could deepen feelings of resentment towards change, particularly if accompanied by a reduction in community facilities.

**Example:** Organisations hoping to reach young people with events and activities must ensure they are offering them cheaply or for free. Council planners could make affordability a criterion for approving new retail outlets. Community facilities should be protected and should not be forced to monetise their assets in a manner which undermines their community purpose.

# 7

## Young people's voices need to be heard on housing

**Explanation:** Young people as young as 8 quite commonly complained about their housing situation – about the quality of their housing block, the size of their flat, damp or other problems. Local young people's quality of life and wellbeing is being undermined by housing issues. They spoke about the price of rent, and some commented that neighbours or friends are having to move because of this. Both the condition and the affordability of housing can have a real impact on local young people. It can also affect the likelihood that they will stay in the area – young people are conscious that they may not be able to afford a place locally, affecting their sense of belonging. When tied with declining affordability of local products and services, this could make young people feel fundamentally excluded from their own area.

**Example:** Housing is of course an enormous nation-wide issue. But more could be done to consult with local young people, and to hear and address their concerns. More could also be done to ensure that new housing developments are genuinely affordable to local people. If talented young people are to stay in Hackney, they need affordable housing options.

# 8

## Young people in Hackney Wick need the importance of their wellbeing to be recognised

**Explanation:** One of the most interesting things to come out of the research was the extent to which young people of all ages value support for their wellbeing – when talking about parks, for instance, they often said that they love them as places to relax, “unwind”, or “calm down”. Older young people mentioned that they don't always feel their wellbeing is prioritised in school, and that they would benefit from access to more mentoring and counselling. Particularly given the close interaction between wellbeing and other issues – such as gang problems and housing issues – there seems to be a need for increased support, both in and out of school.

**Example:** Basic counselling or listening training could be given to all or some teachers in schools, and certain teachers could become designated staff members that students know they can talk to. More draconian disciplinary policies in local schools could be reviewed in light of concerns about exclusions and about pupil wellbeing more widely.



HACKNEY WICK  
YOUTH VOICE



WICK AWARD

Local Trust | Big Local



LOTTERY FUNDED



# HACKNEY WICK Wick Road

## ← LEYTON

- Wick Green
- Wick Community Centre
- Mabley Green
- River Lee Navigation

## QUEEN ELIZABETH → OLYMPIC PARK

- Oslo House
- ☑ Hackney Wick
- Copper Box
- Fish Island
- Old Ford Locks

**New map  
coming soon**

If you have any feedback on this report  
or any queries about it, please email  
[luke@hackneyquest.org.uk](mailto:luke@hackneyquest.org.uk)



HOMERTON HOSPITAL  
I was broke when I broke my arm the people there was very nice and I was born there.

ADVENTURE PLAYGROUNDS

KINGSMOAD SCHOOL

KINGSMOAD ESTATE  
There are lots of gangs here.

This is for you

MABLEY GREEN

There is lots of grass where you can play.

I feel safe here

BERGER SCHOOL

HOMERTON STATION

WYKE ESTATE

GASCOYNE ESTATE

ST DOMINICS SCHOOL

WICK ROAD

GASCOYNE ESTATE

HACKNEY QUEST

CASSLANDS ROAD

GASCOYNE ESTATE

WELL STREET COMMON

I like coming here because there are various shops.

VICTORIA PARK

I love going to this park because there are diggerant f... which gives you more diggerant choices of your want to go. Plus going there with my family and friends in the summer.