Tackling Intra-Ethnic Conflict...
Encouraging Community Cohesion
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Executive Summary

In January 2001 numerous emergency calls, by concerned members of the public, alerted Police to a large disturbance in Cromer Street, WC1. Bengali youths were seen to be fighting with weapons described as Samurai swords and other bladed weapons. Two CSY youths were arrested for public order offences and one DSY was arrested for GBH whereby he had slashed a Cromer Street Youth across the face with a knife. He himself had injuries to his head, which he stated had been inflicted by a Cromer Street Youth with the blunt side of a sword...

Over the last two to three years several groups have come to prominence. These are a Bengali group from Drummond Street, NW1, another Bengali group from the Cromer Street, WC1 area, as well as a white group from the Regents Park Estate, NW1. Allegiance to the groups is usually by place of residence, ethnic background or the school where most of the youths attend. For the purposes of this report, we will focus on the nature of the intra-ethnic conflict between the two Bengali groups from Drummond Street and Cromer Street, since such conflict within and between the same ethnic groups is a more recent development and of immediate concern in the south of the borough. These conflicts have become increasingly serious over the past year, with hospitalisation and serious wounding being caused on both sides.

However, this conflict is by no means a recent phenomenon. It became apparent from initial research, that a history of tension existed between the two groups of Bangladeshi young men from Cromer St and Drummond St. The tensions had become more apparent in recent years, and this could be seen through the increase in violent confrontations between the two groups. The reasons for these historical tensions and rifts within the Bangladeshi youth community were quite complex, and factors such as perceived notions around territory and issues around the distribution of youth service provision, played a role.

In Summer 2002, the outline for an intervention addressing ‘Gang Conflict’ and the resulting increase in anti social behaviour within specific geographical areas of Camden was discussed by a variety of partners to the Race and Community Cohesion Forum (RCCF), which included the Local Authority, Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Steering group, voluntary sector bodies and youth groups in the borough. The discussions were led by concerns raised by the Kings Cross, Brunswick Neighbourhood Association (KCB), supported by the Council and the Police. It became apparent that there was a definite need for a focused conflict resolution intervention between two key Bangladeshi groups/gangs which had formed in the South of the borough, based on both historical & geographical issues.

From a wider perspective, there was also a particular emphasis and concern from service providers, centred around the important role of young people, as key drivers in debilitating as well as contributing to the process of Community Cohesion. There was a recognition that a multitude of factors have colluded to lead to the under achievement or social exclusion of young people, including poverty; lack of youth services; racism; religious prejudice i.e. Islamophobia; failure to address educational opportunity; lack of employment services and so on.
The increase in gang related violence and the resulting territorialism, was not only a key priority for service providers and local residents, but was also a major concern for youth centres in the area. These youth centres in the voluntary sector had experienced that gang culture and the subsequent violence between groups of young people had significantly spiralled over the past few years. The ‘Gang Culture’ in Camden, within certain neighbourhoods and particularly amongst the Bangladeshi youth community was a recognised local problem and therefore had become a priority.

From a series of focused discussions with service providers, residents and young people, coupled with the priority needs and existing gaps in Camden, KCB decided to address the growing area based conflicts and anti social behaviour, through establishing this project, with support and guidance from the Forum. The Forum realised that a project which sought to engage the two key gangs involved in open and latent conflict, would be the only way to understand the underlying issues. Whilst also seeking to address the violent behaviour and geographical divisions within Camden, particularly in the areas of Drummond St and Cromer St. It was crucial to the success of this project, that it was led by a local youth service provider who were familiar with these young people and had a pre-established relationship and rapport with them, in order to attempt to engage the young people, and guide, influence and motivate them constructively.

The initial planning stage took place between the months of September – December 2002. During these months the Equalities Unit, responsible for servicing and coordinating the work of the Forum, took the lead in writing a project bid for the Government Office for London (GoL) to enable funding to allow this project to be realised, in liaison with the Public Order and Community Cohesion Co-ordinator from GoL.

The bid provided an opportunity for Camden to develop a clearer understanding of the factors that support community cohesion and a plan to take this forward.

The delivery of the project took place between February and October 2003.

Aims & Objectives

In July 2002 a Bengali Mela was held in Regents Park, NW1. This attracted youths from all over the country and London as well as Drummond Street Youth and Cromer Street Youth. Several fights between the two took place. One Cromer Street Youth male was arrested attempting to attack a Drummond Street Youth with a machete...

Originally the initial stages of the project were focused around;

- Conducting extensive research and analysis to identify the meaning of community cohesion for young people.
- Assess the present capacity of young people involved in intra-ethnic conflict to participate in the community.
- Research into the key drivers that work against inclusion.

However, as the project progressed it became clear that with a 9-month funding period (Feb-Oct 2003) it would not be possible to conduct any kind of extensive research at the initial stages, if we were to make an almost immediate impact in affecting
and reducing the level of intra-ethnic harassment and violence in the borough. Therefore the following practical objectives were established from the inception of the project, with the clear goal being to lead the two groups through a series of workshops, training sessions around conflict resolution and ‘One to One’ sessions focused sessions where appropriate:

- To raise awareness around the issues of conflict, violence and the impact of this behaviour on the community as a whole.
- To identify and empower key youth workers, and equip them with conflict resolution skills, to ensure conflict is resolved by the youth, for the youth- encourage ownership.
- To work with this group to identify strategies and action that will promote greater inclusion.

In order to manage the levels of youth conflict in the borough, it was essential to have some discussion and analysis around the causes of conflict, therefore we retained some aspects of analysis and discussion with the young people, to encourage them to focus their minds on the key issues that triggered the conflicts. We held workshops to explore these issues further. We also aimed;

- To engage the young people of Kings Cross, Somers Town and Camden Town to identify their experiences of ethnicity and race and how this impacts on cohesion- to explore issues of citizenship, identity and racism as part of these discussions. Explore what these mean to the young people involved. (It was acknowledged from the outset that there may be wide-ranging interpretations of these issues).
- Explore wider but interrelated areas, including issues of territorialism, empowerment, drugs, environmental issues and youth crimes as part of the discussion, maintaining the focus around the views and experiences of young people themselves.

Wider Context - Setting the Scene

In February 2002 a 15-year-old Drummond Street Youth pupil from the local school was threatened with a knife in Coram Fields, WC1 by 4 Cromer Street Youth. He was taken to a car where he was driven around and assaulted over period of time. A report of assault and kidnapping was recorded but the victim declined to pursue the allegation...

In order to better understand the wider socio-economic dynamics within which such intra-ethnic conflict took place, it is important to put the borough of Camden into context and set the scene. Camden has a resident population, which is rich in diversity in its racial, ethnic, linguistic and religious communities, with more than a quarter of the total population of the Borough from the BME communities.

The borough is not many miles across. But the scale of issues Camden face is huge;
Camden is the UK’s most polarised borough
- Neighbouring wards appear simultaneously at the top and bottom of national deprivation tables
- Most people from black and minority ethnic communities (except the Irish) are concentrated south of the Borough
- King’s Cross, Kilburn, Regents Park and Somers Town account for more than a quarter (26%) of the BME population of the Borough
- The above wards (except Kilburn) have the highest concentration of deprivation and fall within the 10% of the most deprived wards in England (Index of Multiple Deprivation 2000)
- One in ten children is a refugee
- And twice as many children are eligible for free school meals than the national average.

However, Camden is also privileged to have a resident population rich in diversity, in its racial, ethnic, linguistic and religious communities:
- More than 140 languages are spoken in Camden schools, with Bengali/Sylheti, Somali and Albanian being the largest languages spoken in Camden schools accounting for 31.7%, 7.4% and 5.4% of the total respectively (2000)
- There are over 4,000 voluntary and community groups in Camden
- Around 196,000 people live in Camden, of these 52,000 people are from Black and Minority Ethnic Communities (excluding the Irish), (GLA, 2001)
- The largest ethnic minority group (excluding the Irish) is the Bangladeshi accounting for 6% of the total Camden population, followed by Black Africans who account for 5%
- Between 2001 and 2006, the number of people from Black Africans is projected to increase by 16%, Pakistani by 15%, Chinese by 9% and Bangladeshi by 7% respectively
- During this period overall, the number of people from BME Communities is projected to increase by 9% and by the year 2011 this is projected to increase to 61,000 representing around 30% of Camden’s total resident population
- Another indicator of the richness of the cultural diversity of Camden can also be seen from the school population. More than 40% of Camden pupils are from Black and Minority Ethnic Communities (excluding the Irish) (2000)

With such a rich mix of cultures and beliefs it is hard to point to an ‘average’ Camden resident.

Within the context of such socio-economic deprivation, where Kings Cross, Regents Park and Somers Town wards account for more than a quarter (26%) of the BME population of the Borough, have the highest concentration of deprivation and fall within the 10% most deprived wards in England, we see an environment where a large Bangladeshi community settled in the 1970's and 1980's. This had an obvious impact on racial tensions in the area, initially between Bangladeshi and White communities. The trend however in the late 1980's and throughout the 1990's indicated that although there still existed racial conflicts between these two groups, there was a growing tension and divide between groups of Bangladeshi youths.
Local Context -
Dynamics of Conflict

Over the last two to three years several groups have come to prominence. These are a Bengal group from Drummond Street, NW1, another Bengali group from the Cromer Street, WC1 area, as well as a white group from the Regents Park Estate, NW1. Allegiance to the groups is usually by place of residence, ethnic background or the school where most of the youths attended. ..

Key
Cromer Street Bengali Youths (CSY)
Drummond Street Bengali Youths (DSY)
Regents Park Youth (RPY)

Summer 1999

During the summer of 1999 disturbances and fighting between white and Bengali youths in the Drummond Street and Regents Park Estate were commonplace. Covert filing was undertaken by the police in an attempt to obtain evidence and identify offenders. The youths that were identified, numbering approximately 30, were then interviewed by the Police and the District Housing Office from Camden in the presence of their parents. The film was shown to them and details of what action could be taken if this sort of behaviour was seen again was fully stressed to them. This had the result of putting an end to the disorder for that year between these two groups, apart from a few sporadic incidents.

2000

In January 2000 a Drummond Street youth was attacked by 10 youths from the Cromer Street area in Drummond Street, NW1. He was struck with a belt, kicked about the head and body until he was unconscious. He was taken to the University College Hospital where he was treated for his injuries. Rumours spread that he had died from his injuries. Later on that evening up to 50 youths armed with a variety of weapons were fighting in Cromer Street in an apparent revenge attack. Police attended and were themselves attacked. One Cromer Street youth was arrested for a public order offence and it transpired he was the suspect for the earlier assault. The victim in fact had not died and was later released from hospital. Two days later two friends of the above victim were threatened with assault over the telephone and also had their homes visited by Cromer Street youth. Later on that evening CSY attended the workplace of two DSY where they assaulted them. Two CSY were arrested.

In May 2000 officers were called to Cromer Street to a disturbance by approximately 14 Bengali youths. Upon Police arrival the youths made off leaving behind 30 wooden staves, scaffolding poles, iron bars and other assorted weapons. One youth had been assaulted but no one was forthcoming about the reason for the disturbance apart from CSY stating that a rival group was attacking them.

At the beginning of November 2000 a fight between DSY and CSY resulted in 3 CSY being stabbed and taken to the University College Hospital where further altercations were experienced. 12 DSY were arrested for various offences, such as GBH, ABH, offensive weapons and public order offences. Several cars of DSY were stopped by Police
and a large quantity of what was believed to petrol bombs were discovered. The following evening the suspect for the GBH was visited at this home address by CSY and had his windows smashed and was threatened with violence. It is also alleged that firearms had been purchased to use in these conflicts. One Bengali male from DSY was charged with two counts of GBH. He appeared at Snaresbrook Crown Court, but the case was withdrawn as the victims refused to give evidence.

2001

In January 2001 numerous emergency calls, by concerned members of the public, alerted Police to a large disturbance in Cromer Street, WC1. Bengali youths were seen to be fighting with weapons described as Samurai swords and other bladed weapons. Two CSY youths were arrested for public order offences and one DSY was arrested for GBH whereby he had slashed a CSY across the face with a knife. He himself had injuries to his head, which he stated had been inflicted by a CSY with the blunt side of a sword.

In March 2001 a fight took place in Warren Street between DSY and CSY. One DSY received severe lacerations to a hand, which severed his tendons. He did not however wish to make any allegations even though he knew his assailants. In the same week Police attending a disturbance by 50+ DSY in Robert Street, outside the Surma Centre, were surrounded and had to request urgent assistance. One youth was arrested but was ‘taken back’ by the large crowd before assistance arrived. Two days later, Police attended Cromer Street where there was a reported 100+ CSY and DSY fighting with weapons. The youths all dispersed on Police arrival leaving behind a large cache of weapons that included meat cleavers, hammers, and iron bars. Section 60 CJPO Act was again implemented.

In June 2001 a DSY attending the local school was jostled by a CSY. Older DSY then attended the school at the end of the day intimidating CSY. Consequently later on older CSY turned up on mass in Drummond Street and a large fight ensued. Baseball bats and knives were used and one CSY was stabbed and one DSY was arrested.

Violence continued between RPY and DSY throughout the Summer but through various Police operations, arrests, convictions, and working closely in partnership with the Council District housing Office a relative calm settled between the two Bengali groups, with only sporadic disorder occurring throughout he remainder of the year. September 11th also appeared to have a quietening effect.

2002

Last year saw several incidents, which may or may not have been linked. They, however, led to an increased tension between the rival groups.

In February a 15-year-old DSY pupil from the local school was threatened with a knife in Coram Fields, WC1 by 4 CSY. He was taken to a car where he was driven around and assaulted over period of time. A report of assault and kidnapping was recorded but the victim declined to pursue the allegation (a common outcome).

In March a mini bus with CSY stopped in Drummond Street after a sporting event to buy some refreshments. Their vehicle was recognised and was approached by DSY. A fight began during which a CSY received cuts and bruises to his head after he was hit with a bottle and pieces of wood. He received hospital treatment but did not wish to proceed
with any allegation. This month also saw increased activity between DSY and Brick lane Youths (BLY). Each group travelling across London on several occasions to seek revenge for attacks on their ‘members.’

In July a Bengali Mela was held in Regents Park, NW1. This attracted youths from all over the country and London as well as DSY and CSY. Several fights between the two took place. One CSY male was arrested attempting to attack a DSY with a machete. The victim was the assailant of the CSY in March.

In December there was another kidnapping of a SCCS pupil, this time a 12-year old CSY was threatened by around 10 DSY stating that he would be beaten up if he didn’t go with them. He was then walked around for about 45 minutes and taken to the Surma Centre in NW1. Staff at the Centre intervened and contacted his parents who collected him. Fortunately he had no injuries. He did not wish to substantiate the allegation.

Later on that month outside the local school at closing time a CSY was attacked by 6-7 CSY causing a cut to his mouth and a graze to his mouth. The victim then tried to rally more CSY to go to Drummond Street to seek revenge. He again did not wish to substantiate the allegation.

2003

Two recent events have further brought tensions to a height. During New Years Eve and throughout New Years Day fights broke out between individuals and groups of the DSY and CSY. Various reasons were given for the incidents. The end result of his was that at around 10.30pm on New Years Day three cars of CSY went to Drummond Street. There they saw about 10-15 DSY. They decamped from their vehicles and one youth was attacked with a baseball bat. He was rendered unconscious and another DSY was stabbed attempting to help him. Both went to UCH. One male had bleeding on the brain and was taken to the Neurology Department, WC1. where he was treated for nearly two weeks. He now suffers from slight brain damage and epilepsy. The other male had stitches to his hand.

The suspects were arrested within days, charged and remanded in custody. Several assaults by DSY on CSY then occurred over the following days. Threats were made to families of the assailants.

Towards the end of January a pupil of the local school was abducted on his way home by approximately 12 DSY. He had a knife placed to his back and was taken to several locations where he was beaten by the youths. At one point he was hit over the head with a hammer and rendered unconscious. He managed to escape and made his way back to the school where he was taken to hospital. Whilst being assaulted reference was made to Cromer Street youths and that the victim “hung about with them.” Three juveniles have subsequently been arrested and have been released to Police bail pending enquiries.

More recently, on 20th October 2003 in the early evening several white youths were chased by a group of Bengali youths through the Regents Park Estate to a youth club. It is believed they were all armed with baseball bats. Youths from the youth club then joined together, arming themselves then chased the Bengali youths away. It is thought that this is because two white youths who were sentenced to 24 months and 18 months imprisonment in June for a racially
aggravated GBH the previous June in Harrington Street had been released.

On Tuesday 21st October 2003 at around 4pm a Bengali youth from the Regents Park Estate was making his way home from the SCCS. When he reached Crowndale Road he was set upon by approx 8 Bengali youths from the Cromer Street area whom are believed ex pupils of the school. He received injuries to his head and face and was treated at the UCH where he was later released. Several persons have been named as being responsible...

Key Stages

In June 2001 a Drummond Street Youth attending the local school was jostled by a Cromer Street Youth. Older Drummond Street Youth then attended the school at the end of the day intimidating Cromer Street Youth. Consequently later on older Cromer Street Youth turned up on mass in Drummond Street and a large fight ensued. Baseball bats and knives were used and one Cromer Street Youth was stabbed and one Drummond Street Youth was arrested...

5 Key Stages of Project

1. Let's Recruit

Through the existing links the youth workers had with each group, we were able to recruit individuals from both the Cromer St (CS) and the Drummond St (DS) groups. The initial recruitment phase was followed by, establishing, agreeing and signing contracts for the lifetime of the project. The agreements defined the aims and objectives of the project and outlined expectations in terms of behaviour and negotiated ground-rules.

The recruitment of young people as 'peer educators' who would guide and influence the format and structure of the workshops and overall direction of the project, was crucial to the success of the project, since the Peer Educators brought with them the benefit of experience and hindsight which we hoped we could tap into. This would enable us to influence the young people currently engaged in ongoing conflict and violence, in a positive and convincing manner.

As such, the chosen peer educators were from the area, they were existing youth workers who had been born and bred in the CS/DS areas, and had also been party to the conflict at an earlier stage in their lives (and were now fully reformed). The Peer Educators were in the unique position of being able to fully identify with the aims and objectives of the project, as well be able to target the young people in an effective and appropriate manner.

We found the Peers were very keen to support and facilitate workshops in an attempt to make a positive contribution. They
also possessed varying skills including leadership skills, however, they need to be fully trained so they could learn the various techniques of engagement and conflict resolution, and their skills and experience may be harnessed and directed positively.

**Initial Recruitment:**

- 2 outreach workers were appointed to undertake outreach work and identify young people,
- 4 peer educators planned the workshops in consultation with the stakeholders.
- 2 youth workers were assigned to the Somers Town area, to identify 10-12 young people from 14-16 age group, and 10-12 young people from the older 17-19 age group.
- 2 youth workers were assigned to the Kings Cross area, to identify 10-12 young people from 14-16 age group, and 10-12 young people from the older 17-19 age group.
- 2 youth workers were assigned to the Drummond Street, to identify 10-12 young people from 14-16 age group, and 10-12 young people from the older 17-19 age group.

Outreach was a crucial part of this project, and the workers appointed were regularly engaged in undertaking outreach in youth centres and on the streets to engage with young people and encourage them to participate in project. Youth workers spent the initial 2-3 weeks building a relationship with the young people at the sharp-end of conflict. This was a crucial phase of the project, since bringing the young people on side would later encourage them to attend the conflict resolution sessions. A key youth worker from KCB attended the weekly youth sessions at the BWA Surma Centre to build a relationship with the young people there.

However, following on from the initial outreach and discussion with youth and service providers from the three areas mentioned, it was decided not to continue work with the older age group, who were found not to be the main protagonists in the current conflict. A decision was also made not to concentrate efforts and resources in the Somers Town area, an area found not to be part of the current catchment area for conflict to ignite or be perpetuated. The reasons for this are explored further in Chapter 7.

**2. Let’s Equip Our Workers With The Essential Skills**

The next stage was identifying a trainer to provide conflict resolution skills and techniques to the youth workers. Axis Community Solutions provided a series of workshops aimed at the youth workers and peer educators, to equip them with the necessary skills and abilities to work with young people and in conflict resolution. They trained young people and workers to facilitate workshops, and enabled them to gain the confidence and the necessary skills in conflict resolution.

**3. Let’s Work in Partnership**

During the inception of the project we forged partnerships with the key Voluntary/Youth agencies based in the areas of conflict e.g. Surma, KCB, Hampden centre. These agencies played a crucial and pivotal role in helping to identify the key young people at the ‘sharp end’ who proceeded to be nominated for our programme of work and participate in the workshops. There was a continual exchange of information between agencies where workers from the conflict areas would reciprocate crucial information
on the dynamics of the youth conflict in the area and the key people and 'ringleaders' involved. Senior workers from all sides also had regular face-to-face meetings and developed a closer working relationship consequently.

However, there were some instances where partnership working wasn’t working as fully as we would have liked, and where participation and willingness to co-operate was minimal. Key reasons for this lack of co-operation between certain youth agencies is explored in the next chapter.

We also worked closely with a number of statutory and voluntary groups in order to achieve our aims and objectives, including the Youth Offending Team (YOT), the Anti-Social Behaviour Action Group (ASBAG), Education Authority, Family Focus Unit (FSU), the Youth Service, Community Safety Team, Youth Inclusion Support Panel, as well as the Surma Centre and the Hampden Centre. There was also close working and co-operation between the police and the street wardens. There was great success for instance where cricket sessions were organised involving the rival groups, in conjunction with Camden’s street wardens, during the summer term. Due to ongoing conflict, several meetings were also held with parents groups in conjunction with the respective youth workers who were working in those areas. Parents comments ranged from concern around the safety and security of their children: “More needs to be done. We are worried about the safety of our children, it’s our community that is fighting... we are worried about drugs, criminal activities…” to comments which demonstrated their lack of understanding about the system and their consequent fears and uncertainty as to what action they were able to take: “We are frightened to discipline our children in case Social Services will punish us.”

4. Let’s Arrange Workshops

Our initial research and discussion around the causes of conflict strongly indicated that substance misuse playing a key tool in the cause of conflicts, therefore we organised a workshop in conjunction with New Roots and Impact (part of AddAction), specialists in providing drugs and alcohol awareness-raising sessions, advice and support. Comprehensive drugs awareness raising sessions for both ‘gangs’ were organised, where substances misuse was fully explained and its implication in relation to the social and legal aspect. The young people who were nominated to participate in the workshops were all experimenting with some form of drugs, and were from the respective gangs currently engaged in conflict.

Mahmood Miah (Young Person’s Worker, Impact Project, AddAction) was the Trainer for the Drugs Awareness Raising sessions, and delivered workshops from May-August 2003.

Mahmood’s role includes providing 1-1 counselling, client support, training and awareness raising on a project basis etc

“When I did the training with them, in my opinion the kids were in denial, quite often the young people from ethnic minorities are open but they seemed to know more that what they were presenting in terms of substance misuse… they are exposed to some things by the environment because Kings Cross is highly active at the moment in terms of drug use and drug dealing…”

“Through our questioning techniques we got feedback about what they (the young people) knew about the drugs, but they weren’t saying much. For example they didn’t even mention cocaine and heroin, and we know a lot of it is happening in Kings Cross… (I questioned here as to why this may be?) “Well, some of them did feel embarrassed talking about it, it makes it
difficult to open up when you’re from the same background.”
(Mahmood is Bengali male)

When questioned whether Mahmood thinks there may be a connection between the gang violence in the area and drug use?

“I do feel there is a connection having seen some of the young people and seen their involvement in criminal activities, in terms of stealing, burglaries in other houses and even from their parents. They have easy access at home... but I don’t think you can say its just to do with drugs, gang warfare has been going on for a long time, its territorial, drugs add onto the gang warfare because if your characteristics or behaviour changes because of drug use, then I feel that that adds fuel to the gang warfare cos you’re hyped up and more receptive to violence...

“I also think issues such as unemployment, lack of education, lack of support etc. as well as drug use all add onto gang warfare. It becomes a combination of factors. I don’t like to pinpoint one factor, cos that’s not a fair judgement, because drug use is a form of depression, people use drugs because of problematic situations in their lives...its a form of escapism, for example if someone loses their job they may be more likely to turn to drugs. its a mentally-related illness, and basically comes from any form of pressure that drives you to seek some kind of comfort... Drug use makes you feel energetic, excited, gives you a buzz, etc.”

Mahmood’s overall aim was to encourage the young people to come to the centre for information, advice and to access any other services. He said, “I encouraged the young people to talk about the issues, explaining there was no harm in the discussion around drugs issues. This was not a taboo subject and I ensured supporting and information was clearly provided.”

A rolling programme of workshops aimed at conflict resolution were organised, and these are discussed further in the next chapter.

5. Let’s Promote the Project to Encourage Others

The Project was promoted at events aimed at increasing the communities understanding of Community Cohesion. Project was promoted at Glimpse of Bangladesh Event held at British Library on 15 June 2003. This included a poster competition for under-14s on project themes e.g. looking at culture and identity issues. Project members and volunteers supported the Kings Cross County Show on 19 July 2003. This event was an opportunity to celebrate Kings Cross and develop a sense of communal pride in the area. Young people from Kings Cross patch supported the Unity Cup at Argyle Square on 12 August 2003.

Setbacks

We established contracts for the project participants, met with the groups and discussed the nature of the project, planned the workshop contents, organised venue hire and established support mechanisms for both the young people and facilitators during the course of the project.

However, there were a number of setbacks, particularly during the third quarter (May - August 03) where, due to on-going incidents, the workshops had to be put on hold. In the past few months there had occurred several incidents between the Drummond Street and Cromer Street young people, which had a major impact on the project members and the progress of the project. Refer to Chapter 4 outlining the backdrop of violence against which this project was operating. As a result we contacted parents from both areas, councillors and key professional to discuss the matter, and explore options for the way forward. Youth Workers had to work doubly hard to re-engage with young people, at the end of summer 2003. These setbacks are explored further in Chapter 7.
# Training Schedule

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<th>Programme</th>
<th>Target Group</th>
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| 30 May 03  | ‘Basic Drugs Awareness- Raising session | Aims  
- To raise Drugs Awareness  
- Explaining the Law re. drugs possession and use of drugs  
- The Effects  
- Differences between Class A, B and C  
- Debate around the legalisation of Cannabis  

Trainer: Mahmood Miah (AddAction) | Cromer Street Youth and Volunteers | Local Venue |
| 9 July 03  | ‘Basic Drugs Awareness- Raising session | Aims  
- To raise Drugs Awareness  
- Explaining the Law re. drugs possession and use of drugs  
- The Effects  
- Differences between Class A, B and C  
- Debate around the legalisation of Cannabis  

Trainer: Mahmood Miah (AddAction) | Drummond Street Youth and Volunteers | Local Venue |
<p>| 22 July 03 | “Training for Trainers” Workshop | This introductory session aimed at Drummond Street youth workers, looked at conflict resolution, and what this meant from various perspectives, talking through the key issues with the young people, what skills the youth workers would need and various techniques as to how to break the boundaries, and overcome barriers to discussion. | Drummond Street Youth Workers | Friends House, Euston |
| 19 Aug 03  | “Training for Trainers” Workshop | This introductory session aimed at Cromer Street youth workers, looked at conflict resolution, and what this meant from various perspectives, talking through the key issues with the young people, what skills the youth workers would need and various techniques as to how to break the boundaries, and overcome barriers to discussion. | Cromer Street Youth Workers | KCB, Kings Cross |</p>
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<tr>
<td>23 Aug 03</td>
<td>Joint Conflict Resolution Session.</td>
<td>This session was aimed at those individuals who had displayed leadership attributes, selected by youth workers themselves. The session focused on the current situation and past conflicts, and was facilitated by youth workers who had continuously engaged with the groups regularly during the past few months. It was generally agreed that the conflicts between the two groups were not achieving anything and no one present was aware of the reasons as to why it had started. In addition, the young people discussed how the conflicts were affecting their education and their personal lives, and set targets to work towards, which set out rules they would both abide by, to aim to reduce conflict such as, nuisance phone calls, verbal abuse, violent behaviour and the possession of weapons. The workshop explored the issues, which had resulted in the conflict and wider consequences. Various activities were undertaken to exemplify and further explore these themes, encouraging both groups to work in partnership to complete assigned tasks. A few decisions were made, and include recommendations that the young people report back to their respective groups with the contents of the meeting, that a truce be called and the attendees encourage their groups to attend a joint workshop on conflict resolution in the near future.</td>
<td>'Leaders' from Cromer Street &amp; Drummond Street Gangs.</td>
<td>'Secret' location in Whitechapel</td>
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<td>27 Aug 03</td>
<td>‘Basic Drugs Awareness- Raising session</td>
<td>Aims</td>
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<td>Trainer: Mahmood Miah (AddAction)</td>
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<td>4 Sept 03</td>
<td>Session for mixed age-group from Cromer Street (brought in Older Members)</td>
<td>6.30: Arrival</td>
<td>17-19 age group from Cromer Street, mixed in with Younger Members.</td>
<td>Local Venue</td>
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<td>6.40: Introduction: aims &amp; Objectives</td>
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<td>Ice breakers</td>
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<td>Exploring what is conflict?</td>
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<td>What is resolution?</td>
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<td>Personal experiences- wider consequences of conflict</td>
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<td>7.15: Refreshments</td>
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<td>8.00: Role Play: Participants act out ‘real’ situations which they may have been involved in</td>
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<td>8.30: Discussion on role play and recap</td>
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<td>9.00: Finish</td>
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<td>11 Sept 03</td>
<td>Race &amp; Identity session (Cromer Street)</td>
<td>6.30: Arrival</td>
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<td>6.40: Introduction: aims &amp; objectives</td>
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<td>Ice breakers</td>
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<td>What is race, culture, identity?</td>
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<td>Where do we belong?</td>
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<td>7.30: Refreshments</td>
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<td>7.45: Exercise: Exploring the meaning of culture &amp; Identity Discussion</td>
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<td>8.30: Finish</td>
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| 17 Sept 03 | Race & Identity session (Drummond Street)| 6.30: Arrival  
6.40: Introduction: aims & objectives  
Ice breakers  
What is race, culture, identity?  
Where do we belong?  
7.30: Refreshments  
7.45: Exercise: Exploring the meaning of culture & Identity  
Discussion  
8.30: Finish | Drummond Street                                                                                | Local Venue                                                                   |
| 23 Sept 03 | Joint Resolving Conflict (pilot session) | To engage a selected number of young people directly prior to the final session on 2 Oct. 03; to conduct a full risk assessment and be clear about all arising issues, in preparation for the final mediatory intervention between both gangs. | Joint meeting between 3 young people in Drummond Street and 3 YP in Cromer Street. | ‘Secret’ Location in Whitechapel |
| 2 Oct 03   | Joint Resolving Conflict session (final session) | 6.30: Arrival  
6.40: Introduction: aims & objectives  
Ice breakers/ young peoples contract  
Recap of previous workshop  
Exercise  
7.15: Refreshments  
8.00: Exercise  
8.30: Discussion: What is the future?  
9.00: Finish | Joint Workshop with 17 young people  
9 YP from Cromer Street  
8 YP from Drummond Street | St. Martins Community Centre, Camden Town                                |
| 18-19 Oct 03 | Weekend Residential to Stoke             | To break down all barriers between the two gangs through a programme of physical activities.                                                                                                         | 9 YP from Cromer St  
8 YP from Drummond St  
6 Workers | Stoke, England                                |

N.B. All sessions were facilitated and delivered by Helal Ahmed, freelance conflict resolution trainer (Bengali male), unless otherwise indicated.
Methodology & Process

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the chosen youth workers and peer educators had all been born and bred in the Cromer Street (CS) and Drummond Street (DS) areas, and this is a crucial point since they were readily able to identify with the aims and objectives of the project, as well as identify the most effective methods to deliver on these. The initial programme consisted of recruiting two youth workers to the Somers Town area, 2 youth workers to the Kings Cross area, and 2 youth workers to the Drummond Street, to identify 10-12 young people from 14-16 age group, and 10-12 young people from the older 17-19 age group from each assigned area respectively.

However, as the project commenced, it was reported by the key youth worker assigned to the Somers Town area, that there was no real need for youth workers on this area, since “The main issues had existed between the white youth who went to Hampden Centre, and the Bengali youth who went to Somers Town Youth Club... However, this tension has been dead for a while now. The main conflict now is between the Cromer Street and Drummond Street lot...”

It was reported that the Somers Town youth did not tend to get involved with either the CS or DS group, as the youth worker reported, “the (Somers Town) kids don’t need to take sides. Somers Town has its own character and identity, there is no real conflict there...”

Similarly, whilst doing outreach and identifying the key protagonists involved in initiating and sustaining conflict, the assigned youth workers found there was no substantiated need to work with the older age group, 17-19 years in all three areas. When questioned as to why this may be the case, the youth workers as well as the peer educators, cited various factors including, “They have gone into employment”, “They got into drugs.”, “They get into girls who start taking up all their time, and try and impress ‘em.” or “They get into further education.” However, those who did enter further education were said to be in the minority. Also, the older age group stopped attending youth clubs, as they no longer felt the need to form a sense of identity or belonging in a youth-based setting, and this also made them less likely to associate themselves with any particular group.

The senior youth worker elaborated, “The older lot do come to KCB, for employment advice, or educational support or because they want to write up their CV’s or need help with this, and so on, but not for creative activities. A lot of them also attend our drugs support workshops which take place regularly, and we fulfil special needs, or make referrals and liaise with other agencies.”

We deliberately chose to commission a Conflict Resolution Trainer of a Bengali background, since it was important the young people were able to identify and share experiences with the trainer, and during the course of the training this factor certainly helped build relations, trust and understanding between the trainer and groups.

“Initially the groups weren’t as comfortable with me as the trainer, they didn’t recognise me as Bengali until I told them, I went through my identity and background briefly.” (Helal, Conflict Resolution Trainer, Bengali male).

Several joint workshops with both ‘gang’ members took place. For instance, on 23 August 2003, a meeting was held with some of the young people who were considered influential in the two groups. These individuals displayed leadership attributes,
which were identified by the youth workers from the separate workshops held with the groups. The meeting was held at a neutral venue outside the London Borough of Camden. However, in the unlikely event of any disturbance occurring between the two conflict regions, precautionary measures were put into place with the support of Metropolitan Police (Albany Street Police station).

The meeting focused on the current situation and past conflicts. The session was facilitated by the youth workers who have engaged with the groups on a regular basis during the last several months. At the inception it was observed that the young people were not very trusting of each other and felt there was a hidden agenda to the meeting. However, as the young people became more comfortable and in turn more open, the discussions became increasingly productive and the young people even exchanged friendly banter. It was generally agreed that the conflicts between the two groups were not achieving anything and no one present was aware of the reasons as to why it had started.

The workshop explored the issues, which had resulted in the conflict and the wider consequences. Various activities were undertaken by the young people to explore these themes, encouraging both groups to work in partnership in ‘mixed’ groups, to complete assigned tasks. The workshop was very successful particularly in view of the fact that the young people interacted with each other - a task which had proved impossible a few months ago. The workshop further provided an opportunity to set targets for both groups to work towards which set out rules they would both abide by. The aim being to reduce conflict such as, nuisance phone calls, verbal abuse, violent behaviour and the possession of weapons.

In addition, the young people discussed how the conflicts were affecting their education and their personal lives. A few decisions were made and include requests that the young people report back to their respective groups with the contents of the meeting, that a truce be called and that the attendees encourage their groups to attend a joint workshop on conflict resolution in the near future. This provided a unique opportunity to build on this momentum, and a joint residential was planned, and regular meetings between the groups were scheduled with the lead taken by the young people.

On 22 July 2003 (Drummond Street Youth) and 4 September 2003 (Cromer Street Youth) workshops were arranged separately for young people from both ‘gangs.’
workshops explored discussions around the following key issues: To explore the current conflict between the two groups; develop an understanding of the causes of conflict; develop an understanding of the various methods used to reduce the conflict (resolution); Engage with young people in own environment, and develop an understanding of the wider consequences of conflict- familial relations, police, community relations, and so on.

"In the first 15-20 minutes there was a bit of reluctance (amongst the young people) in opening up. I brought in historical stuff from the early '80s that happened in their own area, brought in their area's history and how the Cromer Street and Drummond street youth used to be good friends (Helal, Conflict Resolution Trainer, Bengali male)

Helal went to great lengths here to demonstrate how the current rather explosive situation in Kings Cross, wasn't how it had always been, hence this helped the young people understand the situation hadn't always been static, and was able to go through change, this was a continual process. The trainer also used a lot of examples which linked directly back to the young people’s immediate, localised community setting, examples which the young people could relate to, because he was able to ascertain that the young people took a lot of pride into their community and wished to contribute to its betterment.

"The strongest thing is that young people were able to question themselves and who they were... it increased their capacity to think, if you like, and we were able to produce lateral outcomes, looking at issues such as identity, how others perceive you; how you perceive yourself; how they should have a positive influence in their own community's practices and help their community, help bring in resources to their community......I gave examples of getting involved in community meetings, council meetings, etc" (Helal, Conflict Resolution Trainer, Bengali male).

The Race & Identity Workshops took place in two parts, 11 September 2003 (Cromer Street) and 17 September 2003 (Drummond Street). These workshops had to be arranged separately for both ‘gangs’ since the subject matter involved in-depth analysis and discussion, and an exploration of ‘the self,’ issues which the young people were not ready to explore in front of the other side as yet.

The young people were engaged in discussions as to what race, culture and identity means to them, how they perceive themselves and how they feel to others perceive them. The trainer facilitated an exercise, called the ‘Culture & Identity Game.’ The groups were split into two, and each group was given specific a Culture & Identity persona which they had to act out. Young people from each group then interchanged with the groups to enable them experience other cultures and identities. The exercise also enabled them to realise the importance of learning through participation.

Another useful exercise was where the young people were all given a poster which displayed the slogan, ‘ANY ME IN MY ENEMY.’ A discussion was then led by the
youth workers, where they encouraged the young people to speak out as to as to what this meant to them and the underlying meanings. The key aim of this exercise was to get people to look at themselves and why they don't like others, it was to encourage a period of looking inwards and self-reflection;

“I questioned whether these young people had the same weaknesses themselves, and encouraged the young people to think along these lines, we looked at the negative experiences we had with each other or our enemies and how that translated into our similarities e.g. was the reason why you don't like x person from the opposite gang, because you have so much in common you may be envious of their skills and what you're both trying to achieve, the same end...I encouraged them to look at their guts.” (Helal, Conflict Resolution Trainer, Bengali male).

“I felt this exercise had a massive impact on them, this was quite apparent from their manner and body language..” (Helal, Conflict Resolution Trainer, Bengali male).

The Trainer then moved onto a Role Play, where the young people were split into two groups, and involved in acting out a situation which they may have been involved in or have witnessed. The young people were asked to act out specific situations and ‘pushed’ to think innovatively, at critical moments- to assess what could have been done differently.

“This enabled the young people to develop a greater understanding of how, by reflecting and assessing a situation can lead to different outcomes.

Helal, Conflict Resolution Trainer

“Overall, this workshop was an opportunity for youth workers to explore different ideas of models of working, it also allowed the youth workers to share experiences and knowledge- a considerable amount of time was spent on discussion and the session overran as a result” (Helal, Conflict Resolution Trainer, Bengali male).

The trainer felt there was a similarity in challenges between the two groups of young people from Cromer Street and Drummond Street, “some of these young people had different challenges they were dealing with. They weren’t all going to school for instance, some of them had been excluded, so when we did certain exercises with them some of them may have felt uncomfortable doing the exercise, so to take away their fear I would have to modify my delivery to suit them.”

So why would these young people experience this type of uncomfortableness with certain exercises?

“Because one of their weaknesses was fear of their own personal skills, and they dealt with this in their own way, for instance some of them became a lot louder, or they would start moving around a lot physically, or they didn’t want to stand up and do a presentation...” (Helal, Conflict Resolution Trainer, Bengali male).

The final Workshop took place on 2 Oct 2003, the Trainer began by asking the question to the whole group, as to whether the group thought the conflict would stop? The group responded by not getting up, although “You could sense people would want to get up but it was just peer pressure and pride.” (Rubel, 22 yrs, Youth Worker, Bengali male).

The ‘Clap Game’ was introduced to the group, and the objective of this game was about appreciating differences, appreciating people and the differences within them;
“...The way I play it, was I would shout, any one in this group wearing blue stand up. The young person would stand up and everyone seated around him in a circle would applaud him, and so on...the young people were encouraged to become a community in this way, and appreciate one another, and appreciate the differences amongst them, but it was also key to recognise these differences as not necessarily similar to their own, but worthwhile nonetheless, something to be applauded, and to be proud of...” (Helal, Conflict Resolution Trainer, Bengali male).

The Trainer played another exercise with them where he taught the young people the dynamics of being able to operate in a close-knit, cohesive society, and made them think innovatively about what they may have to do to fit in, or be 'accepted.' This was very effective, as the trainer used concepts already familiar with the young people, in terms of their culture or familial surroundings e.g. you must respect your elders, to encourage close identification with the exercise;

“I divided the young people up into two groups, and called them 'Bafa' and 'Rafa.' These two groups represented two separate communities, which each had their own unique identity, characteristics and ways of operating. One group was asked to change coloured money (I gave them coloured pieces of paper) and the other group were asked to respect their elders (so I had designated certain members within that group as ‘the elders’).”

“I then took one member from one ‘community’ and placed them in the other, and told them to ‘fit in,’ try and get involved in the community. This was very interesting to watch, as I saw each member cope differently with the exercise, it was easier for some than others, but it did teach them respect.

“The aim of this exercise was to teach the young people that most communities have differences within them, but it is about respecting those differences, and respecting that diversity...just because it doesn’t work for you or is not immediately familiar to you, it doesn’t mean it won’t work for others...everyone needs to be able to accept and respect difference, that’s the key message.” (Helal, Conflict Resolution Trainer, Bengali male).

A Role Play took place during another workshop, which involved re-enacting a recent event between CS and DS Lad when they were walking down the street, the young people took it in turns to play each gang.

The trainer and youth workers also felt the role play proved an extremely effective exercise as it revealed the young people’s natural state of mind and being, a side they would never have revealed in front of their friends or peers, where their real-life ‘role play,’ was being enacted in daily life;

“This was the fun part, they enjoyed this so much, I think some of them went into their own natural role, and their own individuality came out...I thought this was their real self, when they were doing the role play...for instance they are more boisterous in groups, more loud, trying to prove a point, he macho...you just knew this was a lot more real.” (Helal, Conflict Resolution Trainer, Bengali male).

One of the key issues that came out of the role play, whilst the young people took it in turns acting as members of each gang, was what would happen if one the key members of the gang was stabbed fatally. Or what if anyone of the young people were stabbed, a common form of attack amongst the gangs. What would happen then? At first, the trainer reported that the young people acted as if it would not matter a great deal, and they played a macho role and declared to each other, that they were willing to die for their friends, it was a small sacrifice to make etc so the trainer then geared the question towards the young people’s respective families, and the consequences for them should they lose their sons, and the results were quite striking;

“I asked the young people so what if you got stabbed and died, then what would happen? Yes your friends may well mourn you,
ask after your family, for one week, two weeks, maybe even three. But what then? They will get on with their own lives but what about your family? Your families will still be mourning you three weeks down the line, and for many more years to come...what about their grief and suffering?

“The impact on their close family, scared the young people. They were really, visibly shook up, and you could see they were actually really afraid...you see they put on this untouchable mode, but the reality is, one accidental stab is all it takes, and that can be enough to kill you, and telling the young people the stark reality of what can happen on the streets out there, and there have been many close calls, had a big impact on them...put a lot of them in massive fear.” (Helal, Conflict Resolution Trainer, Bengali male).

A similar exercise was played at a later workshop where the 16 young people were split into pairs, one from Drummond Street and one from Cromer Street, the exercise concentrated on asking their partners questions related to school, community, groups/gangs, likes/dislikes, hobbies. They were then brought together to comment on what they had discussed;

Young People’s Comments

“The group went into pairs happily but were nervous- question was asked around the likes and dislikes about the groups you belong to”

“It was good to see some of the young people getting together”

“My mate got battered by the other group that’s why I am in the Drummond Street Gang”

The aim of the exercise was to allow young people to engage with each other- it also allowed the young people to focus on issues which affected them and hopefully for them to understand that they share similarities and the views and opinions which were common to both groups. The final joint workshop took place on 2 October 2003; “What was really striking for me during this joint meeting, was that here were working with two gangs, the Cromer street gang and the Drummond Street gang who hadn’t seen eye to eye for a good 5-6 years, but at the end of this joint meeting, we saw both groups walking out together. They physically waited for each other, and walked out together! “The workers were in awe cos they had never seen that happen.” (Helal, Conflict Resolution Trainer, Bengali male).

It is important to note that workshops took place during summer to ensure full attendance, and were delivered from neutral venues. Evaluation sheets have been completed for all these sessions and their results and feedback were fully analysed and incorporated during the Final Residential.
from 18-19 October 2003. Six young people got sent back Saturday evening for creating havoc (3 CS and 3 DS). On Sunday am the centre made the decision to send everyone back due to general unruly behaviour; playing jokes with each other etc. As one youth worker put it, “There were no fights between the two groups, 6 months ago these very same groups would have beneath each others throats...however, they got on a bit too well, and have now all grouped together.”

The group of young people taken on the Residential had previously displayed extremely challenging behaviour, many of these youths had the Youth Offending Team (YOT) involved, been excluded from schools, had criminal proceedings against them, and so on. They were largely made up of young people who had also participated on the Youth Inclusion Support Panels (YISP). By way of background, the YISP monthly Panels allow information from different agencies to be shared, then partners decide on a joint action plan (under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, section 115) which allows personal information to be shared between certain agencies to prevent and reduce crime. The YISP is made up representatives from the Police, the Youth Offending Team, Victim Support, Education, the Play Service, the Youth Service, Housing, Connexions and the Anti-Social Behaviour Action Group, and is chaired by Abdul Hai, who commented:

“Approximately 80% of the young people who attended the residential were referrals from the Youth Inclusion Support Panel (YISP). The Camden YISP are for young people aged 8-17 who live in Camden and who are causing concern that they might become involved in crime or anti-social behaviour, or who are already becoming involved in such activities. Reasons for this concern might include truancy, exclusion from school, nuisance behaviour, difficulties at home, drug, mental health or child protection issues.”

The issues here clearly go beyond ‘resolving conflict’ to resolving conflict then providing the key learning, educational/employment opportunities and discipline need to progress in other areas of life, away from ‘street life,’ and all the appeal this holds.

On 20th October 2003 in the early evening several white youths were chased by a group of Bengali youths through the Regents Park Estate to a youth club. It is believed they were all armed with baseball bats. Youths from the youth club then joined together, arming themselves then chased the Bengali youths away. It is thought that this is because two white youths who were sentenced to 24 months and 18 months imprisonment in June for a racially aggravated GBH the previous June in Harrington Street had been released...

In terms of the overall learning for the project team following the workshops and the residential, it became apparent that we were faced with a range of challenging barriers, in terms of actually engaging and undertaking the workshops. However there existed a significant range of opportunities, which enabled the programme work to continue, the opportunities and recommendations for further action will be explored in further detail in the evaluation section of this report;

Broadly speaking, the Barriers and Opportunities were as follows:

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**Young People Speak Out**

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Tackling Intra-Ethnic Conflict... Encouraging Community Cohesion
i. Barriers

a. When the project commenced, we found many of the young people were initially suspicious about the project and what its aims and objectives were. They questioned why we were interested in the dynamics of the youth conflict, they were also suspect of the facilitators and what their motives were, why were we interested in the conflict? And who were we reporting this information to?

For instance, the youth worker assigned to work with the Drummond Street (DS) young people found he had difficulties getting DS boys on board, because of a variety of factors. The outreach workers were new to them, so there was not a pre-existing relationship built on trust and communication. As such, the young people were less likely to follow advice or guidance of any sort, due to existing levels of suspicion;

“A lot of these kids had already been in trouble with the police—they thought their faces would get known, territory is a big issue for them, it’s all about our territory, our patch; and conflicts are ignited through these dynamics.” (Kaji, 23 yrs, Senior Youth Worker, Bengali Male).

“We have always worked in Kings Cross and I tried to give ownership to the young people and help them define their own activities, it was hard work to try and pull this project off.” (Sha, 33 yrs, Senior Youth Worker (cross-over experience, Bengali male)

To overcome some of the difficulties around gaining young people’s trust, and so on, two of the key youth workers chosen to work on the project had cross-over experience, that is, they had previously worked in the key affected areas of the borough, Cromer Street and Drummond Street, as well as other parts of the borough. Key youth workers were also appointed from the various youth centres in the affected areas, to conduct dedicated outreach work in their specific geographical patches.

“They were very suspect, very apprehensive, no ones done anything this long. What are we gonna get out of it. How the hell are we gonna get on with the gangs. Even after conversation they were half-hearted, only after the first joint meeting did they become more convinced, though it was a controlled environment and its not like that outside” (Rubel, 22 yrs, Youth worker (cross-over experience), Bengali male).

“We approached them (the young people) gradually, that’s why it took so long. I think the project touched them personally cos they thought I don’t wanna be fighting, initially they thought, we’re gonna get em.” (Kaji, 23 yrs, Senior Youth Worker, Bengali Male).

“After sitting with them for half an hour you knew they didn’t really wanna fight, it was more to do with pride...they were scared and it was peer pressure.” (Kaji, 23 yrs, Senior Youth Worker, Bengali Male).

“A lot of them didn’t know why they were fighting.”

b. When prompted here to list the possible factors behind why young people fight, the youth workers and young people listed the following factors:

- Habit/ tradition
- Seen their elders fighting
- Hostility
- It’s always been there
- Lack of social control and less respect for parents
- Young People have issues
- Parents from the ‘other side’ also had issues and some may encourage hostility

We questioned the youth and youth workers on the final point made, as to why parents from the ‘other side’ had issues, e.g. Was there a lack of resources or differential resources in the Cromer Street and Drummond Street areas? i.e. (halaal) meat
shops, textile shops, prayer facilities etc. The youth workers explained that families from both sides had their own separate, almost segregated facilities.

Families concentrated around Drummond Street would use Starcross Streets’ facilities for instance, and families concentrated in and around Cromer Street would use the prayer/support facilities in the Education Centre in Sandfield Block - the two would not cross over. This came as quite a surprise, considering the families from both areas were from the same areas ‘back home’ in Bangladesh, geographically speaking.

Asian people have pride in their area/village, but the thing is most families here are from the same district, moulivbazaar neat Sylhet.

It needs to be borne in mind there had existed for the past fifteen years a history of gang culture and sporadic outbreaks of conflict between young Bangladeshi males from either side of the Euston Rd (Cromer St and Drummond St), where Young Bangladeshi males would not venture into certain areas within Camden; At summer events such as Mela’s and Festivals, members from the two gangs would often be involved in minor disputes and recently in more serious violent confrontations, and Conflicts had effectively been ‘handed down’ from the previous generations, who were now in the early-mid twenties.

The youth and youth workers went on to list many of these factors around the environment, context and influence e.g. Influences from current culture/music trends, largely imported from US Hip-Hop/Rap bands which encouraged certain materialistic desires amongst the young people…as one young person put it “Everyone around here wants to wear Versace or own a beamer (i.e. BMW).” There were also other social and economic dynamics at play here in an area of relative deprivation and poverty;

“It’s always that age group (15-16) cos that’s the age that they’re growing up, open to peer pressure, influences from older brothers and friends to prove themselves.” (Soyful, 25 yrs, Senior Youth Worker, Bengali male).

“All the trouble stems from that age group (15-16) then they get older brothers and friends involved and it widens.

“They look at other images, gangster, hip hop, look at the dress sense, wanna be like the gangsters...it’s the American way.

They wanna live that dream. It’s the street life, the thug life that they wanna live.”

“These kids live two lives, one life outside with their peers, and one life within themselves (at home) where they have their own aspirations and they know right from wrong, but in front of friends, they put on a macho image where they don’t give a damn.” (Rubel, 22 yrs, Youth worker (cross-over experience), Bengali male).

c. Did the youth workers observe any differences in dealing with the groups of young people from Cromer Street and Drummond Street? Were there any particular characteristics which were unique to each group, or were there any similarities? The youth workers gave the following responses collectively;

“All the Cromer Street kids were more mature than the Drummond Street kids.”

“No, that’s not true cos there were some Drummond Street kids who really did want the violence to stop...what about that letter sent by Ray to the Mayor a few months ago asking him to get the violence to stop?”

“Cromer Street lot were more calmer, more mature.”

“Both sides were willing to stop the fights.”
“Cromer Street kids had a certain level of maturity and commitment. …I felt there was a marked difference in the level of respect e.g. positive response from cs, not from ds, who were aggressive cos of relationship….it is about how you work with them but there is a barrier.”

“You need to set ground rules and boundaries with the kids. Then they will react.”

“There were 2 occasions when the workshops with the Drummond Street kids had to be stopped cos kids were not paying attention or even showing participatory behaviour. Their attitude was v different. Their expectations were different, they need boundaries.”

d. The youth workers were then questioned as to what techniques they employed to encourage attendance and participation in the project. The Youth Workers made clear that in their experience, young people will not attend any type of session unless there is an incentive, often of relevant value for them. This was found to be a recurring issue throughout the project, and workshops and briefing sessions were punctuated by activities throughout, from start to finish. Examples of leisure activities the ‘Drummond Street’ group engaged in included Go-Karting, meals out, sporting activities.’ The Cromer Street group took part in a day out to Alton Towers, Chessington and meals out.

“It initially was all bout going to Chessington, but then it was about ‘we stop it,’ the young people get fed up, they grow out of it as they all know an example of someone who’s been really hurt.” (Jonny, 19 yrs, C/S young person, Bengali male)

“If you are seen with this or that group you get labelled, but for their safety they had to get involved.” (Kaji, 23 yrs, Senior Youth worker, Bengali Male).

“We had to introduce the workshop idea slowly, as some of the young people were scared, or cynical that it wouldn’t work. During the workshops, each side was saying what if they call their other boys… a lot of fear.” (Kaji, 23 yrs, Senior Youth Worker, Bengali Male).

It became apparent as we went deeper and deeper into the issues at play here, and discussed the various dynamics involved in the current youth conflict, and the factors driving the young people, that young people lead very complex lives. There was clearly a role here for service providers to explore barriers to participation for young people. There were also a number of comments made on the role of other agencies, in particular the educational system, and how these young people viewed schools.

“I think schools should change their curriculum and look at basic domestic issues, make people understand their community better, that’s what’s real.” (19 yrs, young person, Bengali male)

“When I was going to school I did think I needed an education, but all I thought about was safety – I didn’t take my school bag cos I knew my bag would get in the way, if I had to do a runner.” (e.g. got spotted by member of ‘other’ gang). (19 yrs, young person, Bengali male)

“When I was at school teachers used to just pick up the phone straightaway and the kids got in trouble, the younger brothers and sisters went with them (to school) and had to look after them as well.” (19 yrs, young person, Bengali male)

“When the GCSE results come through you think shit, what have I done.” (17 yrs, young person, Bengali male)

“These kids used to terrorise the school, a few of them got suspended, so now they get labelled and are seen as troublemakers, and can’t get rid of this label.” (Kaji, 23 yrs, Senior Youth Worker, Bengali Male).

“These kids have a reactionary attitude.” (Sha, 33 yrs, Senior Youth Worker, Bengali male).
e. There were also issues around providing appropriate support to young people entering into a potentially vulnerable setting - the fear factor of violence had to be addressed through the project, and appropriate assurances had to be given to young people constantly;

“As workers, we had to reassure them, we told the police before our joint meetings just in case.” (Kaji, 23 yrs, Senior Youth worker, Bengali male).

f. The project suffered a number of setbacks due to ongoing conflict between Cromer St and Drummond St youth, which was hindering its progress, in particular recent incidents, which had heightened tension between both groups. Hence, despite the conflict resolution trainer, youth workers and certain young people’s best intentions, conflict was often viewed as a desired thing, in terms of the rites of passage for some young people;

“The older lot always say make sure you fight, make sure you prove yourself - that’s why we did it (the joint meeting) in a different setting… the older lot are always ‘eating, sleeping and drinking’ DS.” (Kaji, 23 yrs, Senior Youth worker, Bengali Male).

Kaji also felt that there was personal baggage, that it was a protective thing, that you had to protect and a lot of young people had this mentality ingrained within them, which was oft quoted, “They would make sure that if they (i.e. other ‘gang’) come, they never ever come.”

There were a number of issues raised by the youth workers around convincing partner agencies to commit, and not undermine the work. Various factors led to a strained working relationship with other youth agencies in the area. The key youth workers reported a reluctance by the key youth workers and management of certain other youth agencies to come fully on board with the aims and objectives of the community cohesion project.

These conflicts were reported to be largely due to the fact that “Both these youth centres are competitors, in any voluntary setting there are only a limited amount of resources and both centres will want to be the ones to get these resources and achieve the results.” ('neutral' youth worker). In order to move forward with the project, KCB made the decision to employ a 'neutral' youth worker from outside the borough to carry out the liaison work with the other youth centre, and this approach worked very well.

“it took time to get them on board.” (Kaji, 23 yrs, Senior Youth Worker, Bengali Male).

“it became obvious to us that certain agencies were not forthcoming due to issues around territory.” (Rubel, 22 yrs, Youth Worker (cross-over experience), Bengali male).

ii. Opportunities

I. The project presented a number of opportunities, the team were very strong which reflected leadership and group working ideology, and the team were able to relate to the young people.

There were many positive comments made about the Conflict Resolution Trainer:
Helal came from a background where he had been there, done that and got the t-shirt kind of thing...he used personal examples...young people now see him running a youth consortium and they think, there's hope for us.

The trainer used direct and indirect ways of playing games...had a lot of practicality mixed in it.

"We had a Race and identity workshop where the kids were split into two groups - they had a piece of paper on which there was something written (e.g. three guys always sitting down, one wouldn't sit down so the other three will always follow suit) - they had to act it out and the other group had to guess it. It was really good cos the game made them aware of how things were. It was stupid what they were doing in their lives, and some of them didn't even realise it. Some of them could see they could associate it with themselves, but they were playfully accusing each other. Good cos it made them aware of how they were."

"As the kids became more confident, Helal thrived with that, he used his knowledge to get deeper and deeper...that's why he was able to play that game (i.e. the Careers game). He did not have a rigid way of working, would ask a lot of spontaneous questions. Worked on the spur of the moment e.g. when he asked the kids about careers, they took charge and did presentations."

"I had grown up in the area, so it worked I still had barriers to break down cos I was from KCB. They wouldn't talk in front of me cos they said I was gonna tell the other side. I said I could have done that a long time ago, anywhere (if I had so wanted)."

"They questioned motives a lot as well, what are you gonna get out of this, you're gonna use us...so what are you gonna get...it's like putting cotton ball in someone's mouth then getting them to spit it out." (Rubel, 22 yrs, Youth worker (cross-over experience), Bengali male).

"They look up to people who have personal differences and who have been through it the hard way."

"The trainer also played a game where looked ahead at future things. He asked them what they wanted to do and how they were gonna get there.

"Some of them said, "I just wanna work in restaurants", "I think I could get to college or uni", "I just wanna get a full-time job and work my way up." Some of them said get into retail (because that was the only thing they could get into with no education)... and "At least its better than working in McDonalds".

"The residential was initially the incentive for them to participate in the workshops. "We knew these questions were a bit unnatural for young kids cos kids, in our experience usually say, what's in it for us, where are we going...they look for their own benefits." (Soyful, 25 yrs, Senior Youth Worker, Bengali male).

"The trainer could relate to the young people and the issues because of his experiences, he was from Brick lane and used to be part of a gang when he was younger.

"Initially I thought it was a loada crap, it wouldn't work, people weren't serious, no right agencies out there. It is a waste of money and I said to Abdul do you want quality or quantity cos I could easily get quantity."

"The older lot from CS said to us well done, what you are doing, its really good, we wanted to make a difference.....other comments like, I can't believe you pulled it off." (Kaji, 23 yrs, Senior Youth Worker, Bengali Male).

"We adopted a different approach, the fact the everyone had input, ownership, had a say, they knew the best approach." (Sha, 33 yrs, Senior Youth Worker, Bengali male).

Comments from the Young People

"I think it's a good thing, I think the project would help as the anger should go...you have anger when you don't see someone but it gets better when you are o.k. I think the others will grow out of it. They're only 16." (16 yrs, young person, Bengali male)

"Getting them to take the first step in getting the two groups together was an achievement by the young people and you have to applaud that." (17 yrs, young person, Bengali male)
“This should be seen in the wider context of conflict. It’s not just about punishing.” (Abdul, 25 yrs, Senior Youth Worker, Bengali male)

“Kaji gave a lot of support to one kid whose older brother got sent down for 5 years (GBH) - I don’t wanna go down the same road as my brother.” (Abdul, 25 yrs, Senior Youth Worker, Bengali male)

“Older young people reported teachers in their school saw C/S and D/S kids together and they said what’s going on? The kids said nothing, smiled and walked away.” (Kaji, 23 yrs, Senior Youth Worker, Bengali Male).

“I met a 15 yr old DS kid the other day who said its good, I don’t know what you guys did but it has made a difference.” (17 yrs, young person, Bengali male).

### Employment & Training Opportunities

**On Tuesday 21st October 2003 at around 4pm a Bengali youth from the Regents Park Estate was making his way home from the SCCS. When he reached Crowndale Road he was set upon by approx 8 Bengali youths from the Cromer Street area whom are believed ex pupils of the school. He received injuries to his head and face and was treated at the UCH where he was later released…**

The project forms part of the wider Community Cohesion agenda, which recognises that ‘Community Cohesion will always be difficult to achieve where opportunities are far from equal and where there are wide disparities in employment activity’ (LGA report, May 2002). In addition, whilst it is clear that poor employment opportunities are a crucial issue in many areas and can contribute to problems of community cohesion and gang warfare, wide variation in the unemployment level within relatively small areas can also breed significant resentment between communities—this is an area the project will focus on, by ensuring ‘targeted communities’ are fully representative of their localised areas in Camden.

These issues were particularly apparent during a recruitment exercise where the Head of ASBAG was involved in recruiting to the post of Receptionist at Kings Cross DHO. The standard of the job applications from the Bangladeshi community, in particular the female BME candidates was of quite a low caution due to the lower scale levels in which they are disproportionately represented).

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1 Current employment statistics show that although the trend for Bangladeshi staff has increased year on year since 1994 and is now up to 3.07% (as at March 2002) from 0.71% in 1994, the population profile for Bangladeshi’s stands at 6.1%. African/ Caribbean employees on the other hand, are more than double the population figure (although this figure needs to be treated with caution due to the lower scale levels in which they are disproportionately represented).
standard, and were unable to make the interview stage, despite the fact that many of the candidates had the skills to meet the requirements of the Person Specification.

Abdul Hai from Kings Cross and Brunswick and Neighbourhood association, had similar experiences to report from a grass roots perspective. He commented: “In the London Borough of Camden the Bangladeshi community are the largest ethnic group of people. However, very few people from the Bangladeshi community work for the local authority in contrast to the service users. Through my interaction with the Bangladeshi young people they have stated that they have difficulty getting jobs with the local authority. Some of them have expressed that they have the necessary experience and skills. Some of the young people in the past have applied for jobs with the local authority, but have not even been called for an interview let alone being offered a job. The majority of the participants are unemployed and facing a bleak future.

“Ian Walker has made me aware that the Council are very keen to recruit people from the Bangladeshi community, however having been on the interview panels and in the recruitment process he has noticed that the applicants from the Bangladeshi community fail to address the job personal specification, which is hindering their job prospects. Although, he feels that the applicants have the necessary experience and skills. Our discussion led us to organise a few workshops with the young men from the Bangladeshi community, particularly those who were at risk of getting drawn into the gang conflict. These workshops explored job specification training and tips on interviews.”

The aims of this project were to primarily arrange voluntary work placements for currently underrepresented groups within Camden’s employment workforce, to enable us to take action to raise expectations, and facilitate the progression of under-achieving or socially excluded groups, as well as challenging views about stereotypical occupations.

We arranged two rounds of work placements with the Bangladeshi community as our pilot group. The first tranche involved seven young males and 1 female (although it was originally proposed that an equal number of men to women would be targeted- the learning points are covered below). This took place in Summer 2002. The second round of work placements took place in Summer 2003 in liaison with KCB and the Surma Centre. The training days were particularly successful in attracting a number of young people involved in ‘gang violence’ and anti-social behaviour in the area. ASBAG maintained an interested in these particular young people, and arranged several work placements within the caretaking section. This proved extremely successful in providing these young people, who otherwise had a long history of anti-social behaviour, with the opportunity to undertake voluntary work to help maintain and physically improve their local area, the very space which they may have previously vandalised or done graffiti, and enabled them to ‘put something back into the community.’

Since completing the ‘Access to Employment’ project, of the five young people who gained work placements, four made the interview stage with two young people being successful. Prior to the inception of the employment project, not a single person out of the five had made the interview stage, despite having made previous applications for Council jobs.

Furthermore, the series of work placements have proved useful in providing Camden Officers with the opportunity to gain supervisory experience which may, in turn, help promote their own career prospects.

Finally, from a grass-roots perspective, did the project achieve any real changes at the ground level? Abdul Hai from the Kings Cross and Brunswick Neighbourhood Association
Overall, the young men found the workshops very useful. The Bangladeshi young men were interested in work placements with the local authority, which were arranged for the people to gain experience. As a result several had successful applications leading to successful interviews and jobs. The workshops and placements were very popular within the community and I am hoping to continue with them in partnership with the local authority. People who participated in the workshops and the work placements are sharing their experiences with others. This has given the young men the confidence to learn through informal approaches and further their learning and skills. As a result of the workshops and work placements some of those people are now working for the local authority.

Many of the young people share common interests and live in a geographical area that has a very high percentage of unemployment amongst the Bangladeshi young men, who come from deprived or disadvantaged backgrounds. Within the London Borough of Camden the Bangladeshi community are under-represented within the local authority workforce. We believe within this particular work we are promoting the following:

- Promoting active participation
- Creating jobs and training opportunities
- Creating learning experiences
- Encouraging people to share their experiences and skills with others

Our work with the young men has brought about changes to their lives and their community. Through their experiences they were able to complete job application forms leading to successful interviews and jobs with the local authority. Our practice illustrates what can be achieved through partnership work and bringing about much needed changes that benefit the council, the community and society as a whole.

Case Study (Bengali Male, 22 yrs, Camden Town)

One young man came to us who had done a lot of admin work with insurance/ mortgage companies. He had limited education, he had done various foundation courses at college and then went onto full-time work in car insurance as an administrator. He had made applications to the council on various occasions but had not been successful because he did not have the necessary skills in how to fill in job applications, and the interview process. Ian Walker (Head of Anti-Social Behaviour Action Group in the Housing Department) came in to address these points with a group of young people, and the young person learnt very fast, Ian said ‘he was very bright,’ and he was given a voluntary work placement with the Repairs section as an administrator. His placement lasted four weeks. When a vacancy came up in the Repairs Section, he applied and successfully got the job - he now works for them on a full-time basis, and is fully settled.” (Kamal, Community Youth Development Worker, Surma Community Centre).

Hendon

We participated in a work shadowing and awareness raising day on 15 July 2003 with the local Metropolitan Police. We worked in conjunction with Camden’s Housing Department (ASBAG team) and the Bengali Workers’ Association, to take along young Bengali people who were at the periphery of gang conflict. We identified 10 youth to attend the Police Training Centre in Hendon, so they may gain an insight into the workings of the police, develop empathy and an understanding for the role, and well as encourage possible career progression. The trip proved very successful and quite encouraging, since 3 young Bangladeshi males connected with our youth conflict project, have since requested applications and are in the process of applying to become police officers – they are being supported by ourselves and the Community Safety Team with their applications. Some of the others discovered it was definitely not for them, but were going to tell their friends about it.

Channel Tunnel Link

We arranged employment and training opportunities for identified young people at the ‘sharp end’ of intra-ethnic conflict, in liaison with the Channel Tunnel link (CTL) Development programme. In addition, we have worked to ensure some of the young people again at the fringes of the intra-ethnic youth conflict, will be awarded apprenticeships opportunities by CTL (Channel Tunnel Link).
“This project is part of a central London partnership programme known as the EQUAL Partnership—Building London Creating Futures. The project helps to create a gateway for local people into the construction industry, specifically for unemployed people. By way of background, this links into the Kings X Re-development initiative, which will be spending approx 2 million in Kings X as part of their objective to create opportunities for employment and education in the area. We nominated 18 young people, again at the fringes of the intra-ethnic youth conflict, to participate in various pre-employment awareness courses which provided them with an understanding of the various aspects of construction. Apprenticeship opportunities are now in the pipeline for these young people, providing them with work opportunities within the construction industry; working within plumbing or being trained up to become an electrician. Interviews were held, and we helped coach the young people and provide them with the relevant skills to succeed in these, which lead onto the start of the apprenticeship programmes. We hope we have achieved in our overall aim, to refer largely those young people in the 18-19 year group, divert them away from conflict and crime, and encourage them to do something constructive with their lives.” (Abdul Hai, Senior Youth Worker, KCB).

Conclusion

In March 2002 a mini bus with CSY stopped in Drummond Street after a sporting event to buy some refreshments. Their vehicle was recognised and was approached by DSY. A fight began during which a CSY received cuts and bruises to his head after he was hit with a bottle and pieces of wood. He received hospital treatment but did not wish to proceed with any allegation...

The Community Cohesion Project concluded with a final evaluation of the project with the whole project team, including the youth workers and young people. Despite our initial plans to hold an Awards Ceremony in the Mayors Parlour, Camden Council, following on from extensive discussion with the project team, it was jointly decided and agreed that at this juncture of the project, it would not be appropriate to hold an Awards Ceremony. It was generally felt that there was still a long way to go in terms of making a substantive impact on reducing the actual level of intra-ethnic violence in the borough, and encouraging community cohesion and social inclusion at the grass roots;
"This is far more productive than having an event at the end of it. We need a continuation otherwise these young people will get labelled, in my personal opinion events like these are for politicians." (25 yrs, Senior Youth Worker, Bengali male).

"It would be like using the young people." (23 yrs, Senior Youth worker, Bengali Male).

"We don't want to glorify something we haven't achieved fully, don't wanna showcase. It's more about having continuity and we need to work with the community and have some kind of parental engagement programme- the support needs to be there in Camden as well as cultural understanding." (33 yrs, Senior Youth Worker, Bengali male).

"We have reduced conflict in the narrow sense, not in the wider sense- police statistics show that incidents have been reduced."

It was clear, that in terms of on-going interventions and sustaining the positive work the project had begun, the exit strategy and concluding discussions clearly pointed the way towards similar interventions being introduced across the borough of Camden in the longer term. More immediately, there was an urgent need to need to continue to provide conflict resolution skills training and ongoing support to engage and support the young people, as an ongoing programme of work.

The project provided some key learning points throughout its term. How service providers engage with young people was a key point in question. We found that young people often have different agendas, as such, concepts such as community cohesion, positive and active citizenship were entirely new and often alien to the majority of the young people. It was absolutely crucial the project communicated in terms, and in a language that was easily comprehensible by young people. Discussions held with the young people demonstrated how a certain proportion of gang conflict was initiated through misconceptions and misunderstandings around the starting point of the conflict;

"when i first attended working i didn't realise there would be results- when we had a joint meeting in Whitechapel for the first 1 and a half hours, it all came down to one incident that had happened, and that boy is no longer involved...it was a school incident where there was a 1 to 1 fight cos of a lot of misunderstanding, both sides jumped in together because of this, but the two kids (who originally fought) are now best friends." (19 yrs, young person, Bengali male).

The other key issue contributing to the increase in conflicts and divisions was the lack of targeted work from any statutory or voluntary service provider. It was clear that there was a growing need for conflict resolution, both in schools and youth centres. The scope for the project was to work with key and peripheral members of both the Cromer St and Drummond St groups, with a far more focused and strategic approach, and attempt to ascertain the underlying assumptions and motives which triggered and sustained the conflicts.

"It (the project) worked cos we identified key members where the main grudges were against them." I asked at this stage what was meant by grudges, to which they responded, "Well, they could go to the same school but there's still territory issues around areas, a lot of them also had personal grudges e.g. one member didn't like the other, so they all joined in peer pressure. At the most it is 3 or 4 members who originally had the issues, then it escalates to 30 or 40."

Mukith Miah, a Senior Youth Worker from Youth & Connexions, based at BWA - Surma Community Centre said the following;

"I was familiar with both sets of young people and was involved in the project through to the end...it's definitely had a big impact on both groups, especially with the under-16 age group...we needed a mediation intervention to give young people the opportunity to talk...this project has worked, comments received from the school and the police would also testify to this."
“They have each other’s numbers, they contact each other, quite friendly, since the workshops held gave them the opportunity to discuss a lot of outstanding issues and have full discussions. The project has been a great success. There needs to be a continuation of this project, and constant monitoring, we can’t be complacent because this conflict issue will come back and then we’re back to square one. These troubles come about because of differences between young people, it’s not because they are bad as such, it’s to do with loyalty between friends.

“It helped cos i don’t live in the borough so i wasn’t perceived as being on either side, i was neutral, so that helped...it is important there are no breaks in a project like this as young people get disillusioned quite quickly when nothing happens. During the final workshops the penny dropped that they were in Year 11 (15-16 years) and had to get serious.

“A group of young people from Drummond Street wrote a letter to the Head of their Year and Headteacher in September 2003 saying they wanted the violence to stop, and they wanted the school to take more of an active role in resolving the differences, they said this has come about because of the community cohesion project, and we don’t wish to be part of the violence. Following on from this, a meeting was held with the Head of Year, the police and young people to explore and discuss the issues further.”

One of the key success factors was that the team were very strong which reflected leadership and group working ideology, and the team were also able to relate to the young people, and this is demonstrated in Chapter 7 where the young people comment on the trainer and their level of identification with him.

However, the success is tempered by the limited timeframe and resources within the project aims were delivered. There is a clear need for this type of work to continue with groups and individuals who are either in conflict or at risk of becoming involved in conflict:

“What we set out to achieve was achieved, in the sense the two groups were socialising with each other and jokes were made with each other, not that tension in the air. We worked with 16 key people and we achieved what we wanted to achieve. We got them united...beyond that we haven’t achieved anything cos there is still conflict out there.” (Soyful, 25 yrs, Senior Youth Worker, Bengali male).

The project also helped to profile the young people in a positive light, as well as developing and providing these young people with the skills to deal with conflict, whilst at the same time raising the social capital and
levels of community cohesion and sustainability of communities overall.

However, the project did experience some setbacks, and we have learnt in particular, that it is absolutely crucial that in a project of this nature, ground rules and contracts are established and reviewed periodically both with partners and with young people. The project experienced some setbacks because these ground rules were not made clear, and we had a situation where certain youth workers were “...not pulling their weight. They were a poor choice of workers, we chose them because they had a good relationship with the youth, and we wanted to give them the opportunity increase their skills base and experience, but they let us down, more than that, they let themselves down.” (Senior Youth Worker).

Therefore, a key learning point for project members, is that it is crucial to ensure from the outset, roles and responsibilities are clearly delineated, and expectations are managed in the future, to ensure all members of the project team and representatives from the young people regularly attend meetings, and open, reciprocal communication is maintained.

**Achievements**

The project has had a number of key lasting achievements, and the following list best exemplifies these:

- Development and training for the youth workers in conflict resolution training and project management.

- There has been a general increase in awareness of social issues in relationship to consequences of gang violence, particularly with reference to the costs and gains to individuals and to wider society.

- The Cromer St group planned and organised a young people led Unity Cup football match day for the summer in partnership with Fitzrovia Youth in Action.

- There has been great success for the peer educators, since two out of the three educators are now interested in enrolling onto the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

- 18 young people from Cromer Street/Drummond Street are in the process of attaining apprenticeships, as part of the Channel Tunnel link (CTL) Development programme. These will provide them with work opportunities within the construction industry, plumbing, or electrician skills.

- A number of young people from Cromer Street/Drummond Street visited the police training centre in Hendon, and 2 young people are now in the process of applying to become police officers, supported by KCB and Camden Council, through the confidence gained on the training and from the support of the youth workers.

- 10 young people from Cromer Street and 6 young people from Drummond Street secured work placements with Camden Council, and three young people have since secured permanent employment within the Council. Prior to the training these young people were unemployed and unable to find work.
Recommendations

The following action points are necessary to consider in terms of continuing the process with existing and new participants:

- Ensure that lessons learnt from the community cohesion project are disseminated to youth workers, therefore guaranteeing that barriers are reduced and opportunities are increased.

- Include local people who have had similar experiences, as positive role models to support young people in terms of providing real examples of success stories.

- To organise regular workshops, exploring these approaches and methodologies with youth workers, supporting young people at conflict.

- To address and ensure that other intra-ethnic conflicts and groups are able to benefit and participate in this work.

- To promote positive partnership working i.e. encouraging a range of diverse partners to work cohesively.

- To organise future sporting activities-young people from ‘both sides’ have shown an interest in future sporting activities to help break down barriers and help young people physically engage in a more constructive manner.

- To address and ensure that other intra-ethnic conflicts and groups are able to benefit and participate in this work.

Again, sustainability was a key issue which was repeated through the evaluation stage. The Conflict Resolution Trainer recommended the timeframe for this type of project needed to be long term and strategic, and conflict resolution should be a core component of the council’s long-term strategy:

“I think what’s key now is that we continue this good work and build on it, get the young people to focus on outcomes, and get the youth workers to pick up on the peer work and continue to engage with the young people... after a few months I know the young people will fall into their old routine, and if that does happen, the turnaround could be a lot nastier cos the young people are a lot more informed and a lot more stronger in themselves. Funding is needed to continue this work, it is also key not to lose focus, this needs to be at the heart of the council’s service delivery strategy, and needs to be seen through to the end.” (Helal, Conflict Resolution Trainer, Bengali male).

At the time of writing, we are involved in the setting up of a steering group, and helping to devise a 5-year programme of work with short, medium and long-term objectives. The partnership will bid for NRF funding, building on the key learning points raised by the project along with previous and subsequent learning. The NRF bid project has been primarily devised by Camden’s Community Safety Team in consultation with a wide range of partners.

On a final point, we would like to end with a selection of views from the young people, and include here comments made on their final evaluation questionnaires. We believe this is important, since in seeking to build strong and cohesive communities, it is young people...
who are at the centre of decision-making on issues affecting their lives. A thriving youth and community sector has a key role to play in ensuring that young people’s voices are heard, and that local services respond to their needs.

These sentiments are at the heart of this project.

Q. Were your expectations for the project met?

“Yes, because we never used to get on with the Cromer Street boys, but now we talk and hang around together and we don’t fight.”

“The workshops were very good, but I thought there needed to be more with both groups.”

“I didn’t think the project would work, but I was surprised to see both sides getting on.”

“Yes, I didn’t think we would stop fighting. It’s (the fighting) not worth it. My brother was beaten up by them. I thought I knew who done it. When we had the meeting I met the boy who I thought beat up my brother. After talking to him I couldn’t believe I was wrong. It was another group from Camden.”

“Yes, I have more respect for the workers for getting us together.”

“I didn’t know we were going to meet up with the other group. The worker gave us a choice which was good.”

“I was scared at first, but the workers made me feel comfortable.”

“That basically we were all being childish and that we need to grow up.”

“There’s more to life than just fighting and mucking around, if you want you can be something.”

“That we have all been stupid and fighting over silly things.”

“Talk to others before fighting… it’s not worth it.”

“Find out the truth before judging people.”

“To listen to others and make up your own mind… respect.”

“I don’t wanna lose my friends but they need to understand we are too old for this. Don’t follow the older lot.”

Q. Which part of the project did you find most useful/interesting?

“The residential was good because we could really relax and work together.”

“The residential. It was good to work with each other.”

“Group meeting and residential. The (joint) meeting, so I could let others know I am not involved.”

Q. What do you think you learnt from this project and how will you use it?

“Discipline.”

“That you can be friends with your enemies.”

“Talk to others before fighting… its not worth it.”

“Find out the truth before judging people.”

“To listen to others and make up your own mind… respect.”

“Yes, I have more respect for the workers for getting us together.”

Q. Suggestions for Improvement...

“The project should be longer”

“Project should continue.”

“Get more people involved. Target more groups.”

“More joint work.”

“We approached them (the young people) gradually, that’s why it took so long. I think the project touched them personally cos they thought I don’t wanna be fighting at the end of it, initially they
were thinking, 'we're gonna get 'em.'” (23yrs, Senior Youth Worker)
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