



Pupil safety on the journey to and from school

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Foreword by Councillor Kanta Mistry

Brent is a young borough, a quarter of our population are under 19 year old compared with the London average of one fifth. We are proud that our young people have achieved the 8th highest levels in London for 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE including English and Maths. We also have a thriving youth parliament and well attended consultation group Brent Youth Matters Two.

It is therefore of great concern that some young people in the borough do not feel safe on school journeys. We know from crime statistics and feedback from young people themselves that school journeys can be blighted by robbery, bullying and anti-social behaviour. This has a negative impact on pupils as well as those nearby. Working in a school myself, I have witnessed some of these issues first hand.

That is why I welcomed the opportunity to chair this task group. I believe that the council and its partners can make a difference. In speaking to pupils, the police, council officers, local Bus companies and safer transport officers, we have found that good work is already happening to tackle this issue and we have identified and recommended ways that by working together, services can be improved even further.

I would like to thank my colleagues Councillor Mary Arnold and Councillor Chandubhai Patel who participated in the review as well as all the witnesses who attended our task group meetings to give evidence. A special thanks also goes to the school council at Wembley High Technology College, and representatives from Transport for London, First and Metrolink bus companies whose positive contribution helped to shape our findings.

As a member of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee I will also have a role in ensuring that the recommendations set out within this review, once agreed by our Executive, are implemented over the next six to twelve months.

Executive Summary

This review is borne out of concerns among a significant number of young people about personal safety as they travel on public transport to and from school. A wealth of data from surveys and crime statistics highlight that robberies, bullying and anti-social behaviour are prevalent at the end of the school day in areas where young people congregate.

The aims of the task group were to:

- Review existing partnerships in place to tackle safety on the journey to and from school
- Look at ways to support and encourage schools to implement initiatives to improve safety on the journey to and from schools
- Look at good practice from other local authorities on ways to improve safety on the journey to and from school.

The task group has consulted as widely as possible and carried out the following activities:

- Met with the Community Safety Officer, Brent Council
- Visited the School Council, Wembley High Technology College,
- Met with the Behaviour and Attendance Consultant, Brent Council
- Met with the Transportation Team, Brent Council
- Met with Safer Schools Officers
- Met with Safer Transport Officers
- Met with representatives from Transport for London, Metrolink and First, Bus Companies.
- Undertook a desktop review of good practice from other local authorities

The task group found that Brent Council has been proactive in tackling pupil safety on the journey to and from school. In 2006, the council, as part of a neighbourhood working initiative ran a project with a secondary school in Dollis Hill where dedicated youth workers were employed to travel with pupils on school buses. As part of the scheme a monthly courtesy ward was presented to pupils rewarding good behaviour. Overall this project was found to significantly reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.

Brent Children's Partnership which is Brent's Children's Trust has prioritised this issue and set up a 'Safety and Security in and around Schools working group'. The working group provides a multi-agency response to this issue and includes representation from the Police, Brent Head Teachers Association, Transport for London, the youth service and community safety teams at the council. The group

has recently secured funding from Transport for London to run a pilot school escort project across schools in Brent.

Brent has a well established Safer Schools Partnership. There are eight Safer Schools Officers in the borough which is one police officer for every two secondary schools. The officers run a number of projects to promote safer school journeys including providing property marking and running a 'keep your stuff safe' lesson during personal, health and social education (PHSE) at the school. They also run training sessions for schools such as critical incident training which would help them to deal with a major incident should it arise.

The task group also found that Transport for London have developed a number of initiatives to promote good behaviour on buses amongst pupils. The London Transport Museum runs a safety and citizenship programme for year six pupils to prepare them for independent travel before they move to secondary school. This is an important project because it helps to instil acceptable standards within young people before the problem occurs.

During the course of the review the task group found that there are specific concerns around:

- Overcrowding on the 245 bus
- Perceptions of young people especially when travelling on buses
- Pressure on schools and difficulty in prioritising this issue

As a result of their investigation the task group developed a range of recommendations aimed at the council, the police and Transport for London.

Recommendations

1. That the membership of the Safety and Security in and around Schools membership is reviewed to ensure that all relevant partners are represented
2. That the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee review current activity to engage persistent young offenders in the borough.
3. That the council develop intergenerational projects to build a greater understanding and mutual respect between young and older people.
4. That a web resource is developed by the Children and Families Department for schools which provides information on resources available to tackle bullying in the community, which should also include Brent's anti-bullying guidance on the home to school journey and the work of the Safer Schools Partnerships.
5. That primary schools are encouraged to participate in Transport for London citizenship programmes
6. That Safer Schools Officers help schools to develop a travel plan incorporating crime and safety issues
7. That recognising achievement should be part of all school escort projects, as a way of encouraging school pupils to act responsibly.
8. That Transport for London increase the 245 bus service at peak times
9. That the Children and Families Department spread good practice on the provisions within the Education Act to promote safety outside of schools
10. That the Children and Families Department encourage schools to include the journey to and from school in their home-school agreements.

Introduction

For the majority of pupils in Brent; the journey to and from secondary school is safe and uneventful. However, the work of this task group is borne out of the concerns among a significant number of young people about personal safety as they travel on public transport to and from school. A wealth of data from surveys and crime statistics highlight that robberies, bullying and anti-social behaviour are prevalent at the end of the school day in areas where young people congregate.

Young people of the 21st century often carry accessories such as iPods, computer games and mobile phones worth hundreds of pounds. The theft of these items is lucrative and often relatively easy to carry out. Unfortunately this activity is on the rise and both the victim and the perpetrator will be a school pupil.

As a result, the fear of crime among young people has soared. Adults are also increasingly afraid of young people. This fear is fuelled by negative portrayals of young people in the media as criminals, antisocial and involved with gun and knife crime. A survey by Catch 22¹ found that 64% of adults over estimate the numbers of young people involved in crime and are less likely to associate them with doing good work in the community.

The aim of this task group is to consider the Brent response to this London wide problem. The issues raised in this review do not sit neatly within one policy area. They require a partnership approach between schools, the council, the police, transport providers and young people to find solutions.

We are aware that the council is taking this seriously and has provided a co-ordinated response. Our aim is to ensure that the resources are being used effectively, are having an impact and that all the relevant partners are involved. Most importantly, we want to see that our efforts are resulting safer journeys for young people and other passengers.

¹ Research commissioned by Catch22 on behalf of The Philip Lawrence Awards, August 2009.

Membership

The members of the task group were:

- Councillor Arnold
- Councillor Mistry (Chair)
- Councillor C.J Patel

Methodology

The aims of the task group were to:

- Review existing partnerships in place to tackle safety on the journey to and from school
- Look at ways to support and encourage schools to implement initiatives to improve safety on the journey to and from schools
- Look at good practice from other local authorities on ways to improve safety on the journey to and from school for pupils

The task group has consulted as widely as possible and carried out the following activities:

- Met with the Community Safety Officer, Brent Council
- Visited the School Council, Wembley High Technology College,
- Met with the Behaviour and Attendance Consultant, Brent Council
- Met with the Transportation Team, Brent Council
- Met with Safer Schools Officers
- Met with Safer Transport Officers
- Met with representatives from Transport for London, Metroline and First, Bus Companies.
- Undertook a desktop review of good practice from other local authorities

Background

Feedback from forums such as the Brent Youth Parliament and the responses captured in the TellUs2 and TellUs3 Ofsted surveys indicate that school pupils across the borough have concerns regarding their personal safety on the journey to and from school.²

² *The TellUs surveys elicit the views of pupils in years 6,8 and 10.* Responses indicating that young people felt 'A bit/very unsafe' going to and from school and on public transport in Brent were 5% and 7% higher than the national average respectively. Feedback was similar in the TellUs3 Ofsted survey which demonstrated that pupils feeling a bit/very unsafe' going to and from school and on public transport in Brent was 5% higher than the national average.

This is supported by crime data compiled by the council's community safety team at the council which demonstrates that there are clear links between youth robbery, school locations, terms dates, travel times, routes and transport hubs.

The problem is exacerbated by large numbers of school children congregating in transport hubs and high streets adjoining their schools while waiting for buses after school. Often these sites become the location of bullying, anti-social and criminal behaviour which in turn raises the fear of crime in not only other students present, but also in members of the public who are travelling and shopping in the area.

This is not just a problem in Brent, a scrutiny review on Young People Policing and crime, by the Metropolitan Police Authority entitled *Seen and Heard*³ which sought views on young people's experiences as victims, witnesses and perpetrators of crime in the capital, highlighted similar issues across London.

Findings from the review indicated that one of the most common locations for youth crime was outside school and that young people were most likely either to be victimised or to commit a crime in the hours after school or college, between 3pm – 5pm or late at night.

Discussions with young people on personal safety highlighted that many felt that they had to take a number of steps to ensure that they could travel on public transport. Young People talked about avoiding the top decks of buses; avoiding particular bus routes at particular times of the day; and even making decisions about which was the safest bus stop to begin or end a journey at.

The Seen and Heard report also highlights that territorialism is a major contributory factor to young people decisions about areas that they consider safe to travel to within London. Young people stated that in some areas, particularly where gang activity was rampant, if they entered a different postcode area they were vulnerable and at risk of attack. There is also territorialism between schools. This can result in tensions arising and fights between young people from different schools.

The Director of Kids Company⁴ provided an explanation as to why some young people had such strong loyalties to their areas. She explained that young people who were cut off from mainstream civic culture due to economic and social deprivation and those who lacked strong supportive family connections created their own alternative cultures, resulting in a disproportionate value being placed on one's area.

The report also unearthed evidence of a 'no snitching' phenomenon amongst young people. The pervasive view is that crime should not be reported to the police as they wouldn't be able to protect them or their families from any repercussions.

³ Seen and Heard: Young People, Policing and Crime, A Metropolitan Police Authority Report 2008.

⁴ Extract taken from Seen and Heard MPA report, 2008

Crimestoppers (2002)⁵ national survey of crime amongst under 16's found that 51% of the 1,064 young people that took part in the survey, had not reported being a victim of crime to the police.

National Policy Context

The work within this review cuts across the interconnected areas of bullying, youth crime and anti-social behaviour but much of this focus of this work is how it relates to bullying in the community. This is a relatively new policy area as most work on bullying focuses on the school environment.

The Every Child Matters⁶ Agenda provides a framework for all matters that relate to children and young people up to the age of 19. It outlines five clear outcomes for children:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

Tackling bullying is explicitly mentioned within two Every Child Matters outcomes:

Outcome 2: Stay Safe

1. Aim: Children and young people need to be safe from bullying and discrimination

Outcome 4: Make a Positive Contribution

2. Aim: Children and young people are helped to develop positive relationships and choose not to bully or discriminate

The Department for Children Schools and Families⁷ issued guidance this year for local authorities and other partners on how to reduce bullying in the community. This guidance specifically addresses the journey to and from school. The guidance states that "Local authorities have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Tackling bullying is a key part of fulfilling this duty."

Furthermore, the guidance states that Children's Trusts and their relevant partners should consider tackling bullying as part of their wider role in safeguarding children and young people. Local Authorities are also encouraged to provide information about where young people can turn to for help if they are bullied in the community.

⁵ *Crimestoppers Youth Survey 2002* London

⁶ Every Child Matters was enshrined in the Children's Act 2004 and set out new ways of managing children's services with an emphasis on partnerships and collaborative working

⁷ *Safe from Bullying: Guidance for local authorities and other strategic leaders on reducing bullying in the community*, 2009.

The framework for preventing bullying in the community is supported by a range of other initiatives:

- In 2002 the government launched Safer Schools Partnerships, marking a new approach to the way the police are involved in schools. The scheme encourages pupils and the police to build good relationships, with a police officer attached to the school. The partnerships develop a range of projects tailored to the needs of the local school these include engagement with parents to address behavioural issues, working with young people at risk, assist in the reduction of truancy rates and exclusion, and tackle offending and anti-social behaviour to create a safer working environment and safer communities.
- Safer Transport Teams (STT's) were set up in 2007 to improve safety in outer London's transport network. STT's patrol the boroughs bus networks, provide extra visibility and reassurance to passengers. They also tackle crime and anti-social behaviour on buses and trams and work with the British Transport Police to improve safety at train and tube stations.
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006 provides statutory powers for schools to discipline pupils who behave badly on the way to and from school, for instance when travelling on buses and trains.

Local Policy Context

Brent Council has been proactive in tackling pupil safety on the journey to and from school. In 2006, the council, as part of a neighbourhood working initiative ran a project with a secondary school in Dollis Hill where dedicated youth workers were employed, to travel with pupils on school buses. As part of the scheme a monthly courtesy award was presented to pupils rewarding good behaviour. Overall this project was found to significantly reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.

Brent Children's Partnership ⁸, which is Brent's Children's Trust has prioritised this issue and set up a 'Safety and Security in and around Schools working group'. The working group provides a multi-agency response to this issue and includes representation from the Police, Brent Head Teachers Association, Transport for London, the youth service and community safety teams at the council.

A number of actions and projects have been developed by the group such as looking at crime statistics to ensure that additional resources are deployed to the sites with the highest levels of criminal activity.

⁸ Brent Children's Partnership has recently changed its name and was previously called the Children and Young People's Partnership Board

They are also looking at ways to encourage schools to include crime and safety issues within school travel plans. A school travel plan puts forward a package of measures to improve safety and reduce car use, backed by a partnership involving the school, education and transport officers from the local authority, the police and the health authority. Sustainability is a strong theme within travel plans and the working group would like crime and safety issues to be included because it will be an opportunity to tackle safety issues and concerns in a joined up consistent and structured manner.

The working group were recently successful in obtaining funding from Transport for London (TfL) to pilot a safer school travel plan and bus escort project. This will be built on the methods used within the Dollis Hill school escorts project. This facilitates school journeys either with existing school or agency staff or by working with safer transport teams. All schools who participate in the pilot will be required to have a travel plan which incorporates crime and safety issues.

Brent has a well established Safer Schools Partnership. There are eight Safer Schools Officers in the borough which is one police officer for every two secondary schools. The officers run a number of projects to promote safer school journeys including providing property marking and running a 'keep your stuff safe' lesson during personal, health and social education (PHSE) at the school. They also run training sessions for schools such as critical incident training which would help them to deal with a major incident should it arise.

Key findings of the task group

Tackling bullying, anti-social behaviour and crime

The task group wanted to understand the nature of bullying, anti-social behaviour and crime that takes place in schools and on the journey, how it impacts on young people and the community as well as the measures in place to tackle it.

Views from young people on bullying, anti-social behaviour and crime

The first group of witnesses that we spoke to were the school council at Wembley High Technology College. We were pleased to find that the pupils did not report a major issue in relation to their personal safety when travelling to and from school, although we are aware that this was not representative of pupils experience across Brent schools.

One pupil reported that they thought that they were going to be mugged by a crowd of youths but were able to make their way back to school and phone their parents. Other pupils had witnessed incidences take place on the bus where they felt that that another young person was being bullied, they were too afraid to intervene themselves and also felt that the bus drivers were unhelpful.

Pupils were aware about the dangers of carrying high value items to school and one reported that they had been shown a DVD at school on personal safety and had found it useful.

Role of Brent Police in tackling bullying, anti-social behaviour and crime

We met with senior Police Officers from the Safer Neighbourhood Team to gain an understanding of their work to address bullying in the community. We were informed that crime on the journey to and from school is a priority for the police and extra resources had been dedicated to tackling it.

Officers informed us that all crime is down in Brent. Robbery amongst young people is a reflection of the modern times where expensive accessories are common amongst school pupils; this would not have been the case even a decade ago. Many schools have banned pupils from bring mobile phones to school but this has done little to tackle the problem.

In Brent, there are no crime hotspots in the immediate area around schools; this is because teachers and safer schools police officers patrol outside the gates at the end of the school day. This visible presence regulates pupil's behaviour. Much of the crime committed by school pupils is displaced to the nearest transport hubs and shops.

Officers reported that the majority of young people engaged in anti-social behaviour, bullying and crime are known to the police, resources are concentrated on those young people who are on the fringes of criminal activity but can still be influenced by positive interventions.

To address some of the challenges posed by antisocial behaviour on the journey to and from school, safer schools officers have developed a range of initiatives. The main strategy has been reducing pupil's vulnerability to becoming victims of crime. Projects have been developed by the Brent Community Safety Partnership and delivered by the Safer Schools Officers. Pupils are advised on property marking and keeping expensive belongings out of sight.

Recently a successful project was held with year 8 pupils where they were invited to watch training of police dogs and horses. This showed a different side to the work of the police and helped to break down barriers between the police and young people. Similarly, police officers ran some role play workshops on 'stop and search' this helped to give young people a better understanding of the issues and difficult decisions that police need to make in relation to this controversial procedure.

Officers informed us that the introduction of safer schools partnerships has had a positive influence in Brent. Two years ago there were four safer schools officers and relations between the police and schools were poor. Now there is a dedicated sergeant as well as one officer between two schools. Officers are in the schools every day dealing with issues as they arise. Activities could include talking at an

assembly on rail safety, robbery and knife crime. They also work with pupils who have been victims of crime, as well as those identified as at risk of falling into crime.

However, raising the profile of and tackling crime and safety issues in schools remains a challenging area. Safer Schools Partnerships are a new approach and there are varying rates of success. Some schools have embraced the initiative and are keen to work with officers to develop projects, while others are more reluctant. Overall schools can be difficult to engage. Even if the head teacher is keen and willing to participate, officers felt that sometimes this is not articulated further down the hierarchy.

Officers also told us that there is no standard policy on bullying and robbery and the lines are often blurred. An incident can take place in a school and be defined as bullying, the same act can take place on the street and be defined as robbery. Schools are keen to protect their reputation and are more likely to deal with incidents such as pupils stealing money from each other in school without outside intervention. The police are keen to work within the disciplinary process within the school but it is important that schools develop a clear policy on this in order to send out consistent messages to young people.

We were concerned when the police informed us that a hardcore group of a small number of young people are repeat offenders and committing a disproportionate amount of the crime. Finite resources will mean that the police will focus on the larger group of young people who are at risk of falling into crime but can be influenced. Whilst we recognise the constraints that the police are working in, we also felt that as councillors we needed to probe into the support available to this hardcore group who were in danger of continuing criminal activity into adulthood. In such cases, anti-social behaviour and bullying can spill over into the more serious gang activity and knife crime. In the long term this leads to a much greater financial and social burden on the council. As this did not strictly fit within the remit of this review we would like the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider this issue either as a task group or as an agenda item.

Work within Brent Council to tackle crime, anti-social behaviour and bullying

The task group met with the council's Secondary Behaviour and Attendance Consultant, who leads on developing and supporting anti-bullying policies. He has reviewed secondary school policies and found that only two schools made specific reference to bullying on the journey to and from school in their behaviour code.

He reported that schools had not approached him regarding bullying outside of school. The council's work to tackle bullying has focused on general bullying in school, bullying around race, religion and culture, bullying based on special educational needs, cyberbullying and homophobic bullying. Support is also given to schools to train peer mentors, work with anti-bullying councils, tackle bullying through the curriculum, for example, the SEAL (social and emotional aspects of learning) and celebrate National Anti-Bullying Week. It was reported that behaviour outside school is taken very seriously by head teachers as similar behaviour could erupt in the school and affect its image.

We discussed ways in which this could be embedded within the school curriculum and it was agreed that a good way forward would be to provide information for schools on where resources could be found should they require it. There also needs to be collaborative approach between the council's transportation, community safety and children and families teams to address the issues.

The Secondary Behaviour and Attendance Consultant reported that he is currently updating Brent's anti-bullying guidance and in light of discussions with the task group he will include guidance on the journey to and from school.

We also met with the council's Community Safety Officer who is co-ordinating the work of the safety and security in and around schools working group. She reported that a survey by Brent's Safer Transport Team highlighted that 80% of people felt unsafe when travelling with school pupils. Anecdotal evidence from talking to young people in youth groups also highlights that a significant number tend to adopt a fatalistic attitude and expect that they will be robbed at some point.

The Community Safety Officer outlined that because of the partnership approach of the working group there is a quick response if criminal activity increases within a particular area. It means that using the latest crime evidence resources are deployed quickly.

School Escort Project

In Brent, a number of teams including; community safety, safer schools officers, Safer transport teams and travel plan officers are leading on developing the escort project funded by Transport for London. This project involves escorts travelling on the buses and acting as a visible presence at transport hubs at the end of the school day. The escorts will act as a support to vulnerable students, encourage good citizenship, deter criminal and antisocial behaviour and promote better behaviour on the public transport system.

The criteria for the funding means that the schools participating in the pilot project must have a travel plan. This is an opportunity to work with the school to ensure that crime and safety measures are incorporated into the plans. The scheme means that acceptable behaviour standards are explained to pupils during assembly. There will be a 'three strikes and you are out' policy operating on oyster cards. Pupils who continually misbehave on buses will lose their oyster cards. It was emphasised that this measure will not be implemented in a heavy handed way and pupils will receive plenty of warnings before extreme sanctions are applied.

Travel Plan officers highlighted some of the emerging challenges with the implementation of this project. There have been problems in finding suitable escorts to travel on the buses. Teachers are preferable because they know the pupils and will be able to identify culprits as well as command respect. It was also difficult to engage schools in the project however four schools have been included in the first round.

The schools were selected for the project because they are facing a range of issues including anti-social behaviour, conflicts between pupils of neighbouring schools, disturbances at nearby transport hubs, incidences on buses. All schools have reported a decrease in incidences since the project began.

Travel Plan officers informed us that we need to understand the far reaching implications of problems on school journey's. Concerned parents could begin to drive their children to school, which would impact upon the council's sustainability agenda. If young people have their oyster card withdrawn this could lead them to playing truant from school. Problems on buses can mean that pupils are late for school.

We also asked travel plans officers about other forms of sustainable travel to school such as cycling, we were informed that schools do provide sessions to teach young people how to cycle but are more reluctant to promote cycling to school as they cannot guarantee safety.

Overall there was widespread support for the school escort project and recognition that where this had been piloted it led to a reduction in offences.

We met with officers from the Safer Transport Teams who informed us that although they are aware that their presence does make a difference and deter young people from unacceptable behaviour, officers are not aware of what sanctions are in place if they report issues to teachers.

We would like to see a greater role for the Safer Schools Officers in helping schools to develop school travel plans. The Community Safety Officer informed us that Safer Schools Officers are well placed to support schools in developing travel plans. Currently 80% of schools in Brent have a plan or are in process of developing one. Those that don't may be facing difficulty because they are resource intensive and take a considerable amount of time to complete.

However safer schools officers with their expertise on transport issues can help them to complete these which will support a number of agendas including sustainability issues and school safety. The safety and security around schools working group is currently in discussion with safer schools teams to pursue this approach and we would like to endorse this idea.

The emerging evidence from the schools escort and travel plan project suggests that if this pilot is successful is rolled out across the council it will address a number of problems. When speaking with the school council at Wembley High we felt that the pupils were not aware of what was expected of them. More needed to be done to raise awareness of acceptable standard of behaviour on buses. This is an important aspect of the school escorts pilot and acceptable standards of behaviour are spelt out to young people during assembly and sanctions for bad behaviour will be in place. Travel Plan officers also informed us that the Dollis Hill escort project highlighted that drivers are more willing to stop for large crowds of pupils when they know an escort will be travelling with them.

We were also informed that experience from the Dollis Hill school escort project highlighted that it is important that the school escort project is council led. This work is only successful if there is a partnership approach and that the escorts are either teachers or youth workers who know the pupils. It has proved to be less successful if the escort does not know the pupils and therefore not able to report issues and concerns to the school.

Transport for London Projects

TfL have developed a number of initiatives to promote good behaviour on buses amongst pupils. The London Transport Museum runs a safety and citizenship programme for year six pupils to prepare them for independent travel before they move to secondary school. This is an important project because it helps to instil acceptable standards within young people before the problem occurs. We would like all primary schools in Brent to participate in this programme.

Transport for London has recently produced public transport guidance⁹ to raise awareness about safe and responsible use of public transport to promote sustainable travel options amongst school communities. The section on supporting good behaviour on public transport features some good practice ideas about safe school journeys. It also includes a case study from the Dollis Hill school escorts project. TfL informed us that this document will be promoted across London.

The task group want to emphasise the importance of recognising achievement as well as challenging bad behaviour amongst pupils. We support the community award scheme as part of the Dollis Hill school escort project and believe that this should be an integral part of future school escort projects.

The task group welcomed the variety of interventions from safer schools police officers, TfL and the council to address this issue. We were concerned that the relevant parts of the council are not engaged in this work and working together. We believe that the officers who work directly with schools within the children and families department and transportation teams should be involved. Therefore we believe that the membership of the Safety and Security in and around Schools working group needs to be reviewed to ensure that all the relevant partners are represented.

The task group would also like to see projects that help to strengthen communities so that different generations of people are not afraid or sceptical of each other. During discussions with pupils at Wembley High, the school council felt that society needed to be more tolerant towards young people and it shouldn't be assumed that a group of young people talking and laughing constitutes gang related activity or anti-social behaviour.

We believe that the council should implement some intergenerational projects. This involves developing projects where young and older people provide support to and learn from one another. This work helps to reconnect generations through mutually

⁹ Transport for London: Tickets Please – Public Transport Guidance

beneficial activities which help to build more cohesive communities. The Age Concern project below is a good example of this type of work:

Age Concern Enfield's Trans-IT computer project

This began as a pilot between Age Concern Enfield and a local secondary school. The project involves a weekly programme of one-to-one tuition delivered by young volunteers. It has not only helped older people to learn IT skills and improve their sense of wellbeing but has served to dispel negative perceptions between generations and help build lasting friendships. After a successful first year the value of its work has been recognised by local neighbourhood police and the project has expanded to involve more local schools in the area.

Source: National Youth Agency Website

Recommendations:

1. That the membership of the Safety and Security in and around Schools membership is reviewed to ensure that all relevant partners are represented
2. That the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee review current activity to engage persistent young offenders in the borough.
3. That the council develop intergenerational projects to build a greater understanding and mutual respect between young and older people.
4. That a web resource is developed by the Children and Families Department for schools which provides information on resources available to tackle bullying in the community. This should include Brent's anti-bullying guidance on the home to school journey and the work of the Safer Schools Partnerships.
5. That primary schools are encouraged to participate in Transport for London citizenship programmes
6. That Safer Schools Officers help schools to develop a travel plan incorporating crime and safety issues
7. That recognising achievement should be part of all school escort projects, as a way of encouraging school pupils to act responsibly

Public Transport

A key line of enquiry within this review is the role of transport providers and particularly bus operators. We were particularly keen to look at partnership working at the local level. To ascertain the extent to which transport providers were articulating acceptable standards of behaviour to young people as well as working with schools to tackle this issue. We sought views from council transportation officers and safer transport team officers. We also held a roundtable discussion with Transport for London (TfL), Metroline and First bus groups who provided evidence on the work that they are doing to tackle this important issue.

Overcrowding on buses

During our meeting with the school council at Wembley High, pupils expressed concern about the 245 bus. Pupils said the overcrowding on the bus was a major contributor to the problem of pupils being disruptive. Pupils are aware that they are often seen as a nuisance to other passengers, this was caused by lots of pupils trying to get on the bus at the same time. This has a knock on effect on other passengers and can make their journey unpleasant.

The pupils asserted that if buses were more regular groups would be dispersed more quickly which would help to alleviate the problem. In easing congestion pupils would be more likely to operate in an orderly manner thus making a more pleasant journey for all.

TfL reported that bus use has increased by 50% since 2000. New routes and increased services have attracted more passengers. The network is designed to be full at peak times so some overcrowding will be inevitable. If TfL are told about an additional service need then they will commission a survey to look into it.

We raised our concerns about the 245 bus with the Deputy Director Community Safety Enforcement and Policing and informed us that their Bus Performance Team were already aware of the issues and were looking into it. We believe that dealing with the issues around this bus service will help to alleviate the problems and we would like to impress upon the council to continue to pursue this issue with TfL.

Relationships between pupils and bus drivers

The school council reported that bus drivers sometimes drive past when they see a large crowd of pupils. Overall pupils felt that they had poor relationships with both the driver and other passengers. They found that adults are often unfriendly and uncooperative towards them. The student council emphasised that good behaviour is a two way process and as much as they are expected to be polite, this should be reciprocated.

TfL, Metroline and First also recognised that the relationship between drivers and pupils can be an issue. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some drivers are reluctant to get involved in disputes and put themselves at risk. TfL representatives pointed

out that they are not expected to do the work of the police but to work in partnership with them to tackle issues and prevent them from escalating.

Use of CCTV on buses

TfL and the local bus companies also contribute to reducing crime and antisocial behaviour. We were informed by travel plan officers that there needs to be strong links between the police, bus companies in using CCTV to deter young people from crime. We were told that some young people believe that CCTV on buses does not work and therefore does not deter people or provide reassurance. We raised our concerns during the round table discussion.

We were informed that CCTV is in operation on all London Buses, it was reported that the quality of the information is improving and is held for ten days. CCTV is passed over to the police upon request. CCTV has been useful as both a deterrent to potential crime and in identifying assailants. It is also important in the work of Metroline buses in tackling criminal damage.

It was reported that any damage to Metroline buses is reported to the police and if it involves a school group then the CCTV evidence is taken to the school. We were given an example of an occasion where the company had CCTV footage of pupils committing criminal damage. The school allowed the bus company to come into the school and show the footage during assembly. This helped to build up a relationship between the drivers and the pupils and eliminated the problem. We were informed that other activities of this nature are available through TfL's Safety and Citizenship programme for schools.

Recommendation:

8. That Transport for London increase the 245 bus service at peak times

The role of schools

A re-occurring theme that emerged during our discussions was that schools are very keen to protect their reputation and can be reluctant to engage in initiatives that give the impression that they are experiencing a particular problem, such as bullying and anti-social behaviour from pupils at the end of the school day.

We are also aware that schools are faced with a number of competing priorities, and there is immense pressure on curriculums to accommodate both the national requirements and new initiatives. In this context encouraging schools to take on another priority issue seemed futile. We were also informed by our witnesses that schools are unlikely to take this on as a priority so more work needs to be done to raise the profile of this work with head teachers and school governors.

Home School Agreements

We were informed by the Travel Plan officers that all schools are required by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 to develop a home school agreement, which must be monitored by the governing body. This is a statement explaining the school's aims and values and its responsibilities towards its pupils and parents. It also clearly sets out what the school expects of its pupils. It is based on the idea that pupils do better when parents and the school work in partnership to support pupil learning.

This mechanism is an important way to ensure that parents, pupils and the school are all engaged in monitoring pupils' behaviour on school journeys. We recommend that schools should be encouraged to include school journeys in the home-school agreement.

Statutory powers for schools

During the course of our review we had several discussions about the use of the Education Act 2006, which provides statutory powers for schools to discipline pupils who behave badly on the way to and from school, for instance when travelling on buses and trains. We were informed that no guidance has been issued to support the legislation and the provisions within the Act are not widely implemented within schools. Therefore we recommend that good practice around the use of this legislation is included in the web resource for schools.

Recommendation

9. That the Children and Families Department spread good practice on the provisions within the Education Act to promote safety outside of schools
10. That the Children and Families Department encourage schools to include the journey to and from school in their home-school agreements.

Conclusion

We have found that Brent is taking appropriate steps to tackle bullying in the community, and indeed has been at the forefront of spearheading good practice projects. However, more needs to be done to raise awareness of existing projects to schools and encourage them to participate.

There needs to be a focus on repairing and strengthening our communities. We are concerned about the growing divide between the young and older generations, where a healthy respect for elders and affection for the young has dissolved into a relationship of disdain and fear. Instituting preventative measures, such as school escorts on buses is not enough to solve these issues; they need to be tackled at their root and mutual respect rebuilt. Intergeneration projects are an important way to achieve this.

Given the pressure that schools are facing, we are keen to see this work embedded within existing agendas such as safer schools partnerships, home-school agreements and school travel plans.

We also welcome the Brent Youth Parliament Campaign *Break the Stereotype, fix the impression* which seeks to challenge negative portrayals of young people.