



Crime, Safety and Respect Select Committee

Draft Report And Recommendations

February 2006



Introduction

The Youth Board was established in 2005 to act as a voice for the young people of South Kilburn and to advise on youth issues.

The Youth Board is made up of 12 young people aged between 11 and 24, who have been elected for 1 year.

Most importantly though, the Youth Board oversees a budget of £15,000 which has been allocated especially to improve the lives of young people in South Kilburn.

Following their election, Board members took the decision to hold a series of public meetings where local representatives were questioned on the important issues facing young people and South Kilburn as a whole, particularly respect and crime and safety. This [interim] report outlines the process of the Select Committee and the recommendations of the Board relating to the meetings held so far.

The Select Committee Process

Crime and safety are important issues for everyone living in South Kilburn, but it can sometimes feel like young people are blamed as the cause of all the problems in the area. We wanted to find out more about the fears young people have about crime, as well as those that adults might have of young people. We also wanted to look at the issue of respect, because it is being talked about a lot and we wanted to make sure young people are part of that discussion in South Kilburn.



Members of the Youth Board preparing for a Select Committee Hearing

Holding our own Select Committee allowed us the opportunity to invite different groups of people to come and talk to us about these

issues on our terms. We decided that we wanted to talk to three main groups of people:

- Policy makers and local officials
- People working in local services
- Local people with opinions about young people in the area

So far we have talked to representatives from the first two groups. These were: Tim Williams and Ravi Gurumurthy (government advisors from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister), Councillor Mary Arnold, Sergeant Simon Brooker, Steve Grant from KISS, Barrie Birch from Queen's Park Community School, and Paul Kielthy from the Kilburn Times.

We will be meeting with representatives from the third group later in the month.

Each witness we called was asked questions about their role in the community, their opinions about crime, safety and respect in relation to young people and their ideas about how to make South Kilburn a better place to live.

This report sets out our recommendations for how adults and young people in South Kilburn can better work together on these issues, based on the evidence we have gathered during these meetings and on our understanding of the opinions and experiences of the young people we have been elected to represent.



Councillor Mary Arnold faces tough questions from the Youth Board

Our Definition of Respect

As the issue of respect is one that is being talked about a lot in many different ways, we feel it is important to define what we mean when we talk about respect.

We think that respect is about understanding other people, their views and their actions. It should not depend on a person's race, status or age, but should mean treating everyone equally and not judging a person before you know them.

Crime, Safety and Respect: Where We Are Now

South Kilburn is an area which is going to change a lot in the next few years, but there are some good things about where we live at the moment. These include the parks, the local people, a local councillor who cares about what's going on, the NDC, its money and plans and the fact that we have a Youth Board, which gives young people a voice to speak.

However, there are also problems in the area. We know that local adults have told the police that they think that drugs and anti-social behaviour by youths are the two biggest problems in South Kilburn.



Government adviser Ravi Gurumurthy appearing in front of the Select Committee

Just as adults fear crime in the area, so do young people. There are too many problems with guns, knives, drugs and gangs. A lot of the housing in the area is of bad quality. As young people, it can be hard growing up in South Kilburn. Although there are some clubs and activities available for young people, there is not enough for us to do. Some projects start and only last a few weeks, which is worse than having nothing at all. It can sometimes feel like there is a lack of sincere help or a serious commitment to action.

It can also feel like adults assume we are all criminals who just want to make trouble; or at best, that they think we should be seen, but not heard.

Many adults don't respect young people, but young people are automatically expected to respect adults. This leads to misunderstanding and tension between us.

Crime, Safety and Respect: Where We Would Like to Be

Having NDC money means that we have a great opportunity to change South Kilburn and make it a better place to live. We would like to see South Kilburn become the kind of area that people want to stay in – too many people leave as soon as they can at the moment.



Barry Birch, Deputy Head of Queen's Park School seen here being questioned about bullying while Sergeant Simon Brooker and the Estate Warden's look on.

Our vision of a better South Kilburn is one where there are enough facilities, not just for young people but for all people living here. There would be more and better homes, with no needles on the staircases. There would be less police in the area, because there was less crime. There would be more places to go and things to do. We would like to have more clubs and workshops, which last longer than a month and which let us do the things we enjoy, like a music studio. Finally, we would like to live in an area where adults get to know young people and we can work together to improve South Kilburn.

Working Together to Make South Kilburn A Safer Place

Throughout the Select Committee process people have been telling us how important it is that local people are involved in deciding what happens to their area, as they are the ones that know it best. We agree that this is very important and want to make sure that young people are involved in this as well.

As young people we may like to do different things and have different ideas about how to solve South Kilburn's problems, but our worries about the area are pretty much the same as those of the adults. We need to work together if we are to get the best for South Kilburn.

As elected members of the Youth Board, we are here to represent young people in this area and make sure that we get the best for them. Young people are interested in getting involved in their community and we think it is important that adults recognise that.

To conclude our report on the Select Committee, we would like to make some recommendations, to help make sure that something good comes out of what we have been doing.



The turn of Tim Williams, regeneration expert and government adviser, to face the Board

Our Recommendations

There are problems between adults and young people in the area. This is partly because people don't have the chance to get to know each other, which leads to stereotyping and a lack of trust.

We recommend that the NDC and the Youth Board work together to organise ways in which adults and young people can get to know each other better – for example, by holding more community festivals. In this way we can hopefully build up mutual respect.

Both adults and young people agree on the fact that there are not enough facilities for young people in South Kilburn at the moment.

We recommend that more resources are made available, so that there is more for young people to do in South Kilburn. This is not just about more youth clubs; it is about making sure that what is available is what young people want. It is also about making sure that what is provided for young people is done so with their best interests at heart and not those of adults or those with the money. You can only do that if you ask young people what they want.

We are glad of the opportunity to be the mouthpiece for young people's views, but are keen to make sure that we can actually make a difference. This will only happen if we are a proper part of the wider organisation. There needs to be ongoing contact between the Youth Board and the NDC if we are to make a real difference to the lives of young people in South Kilburn.

We recommend that the Youth Board be involved in all matters that affect young people – not just "youth" issues. When the NDC is considering any changes that will have an impact on young people, then young people (via the Youth Board) must be included in the consultation and decision-making process. We can also be a point of contact for other services, like the Wardens, if they want to find out what young people think or want.