

LAMBETH'S VIOLENCE CRISIS

A manifesto

Lambeth Peer Action Collective



We are a collective of young people and youth organisations working to create a future free from violence in Lambeth, supported by High Trees and funded in part by the Youth Endowment Fund.

Lambeth remains one of the most dangerous places in the country to be young. While Brixton booms, for too long local communities have had to live with inequalities that feed a cycle of violence.

Our peer research team explored the relationship between the environment that young people grow up in and levels of youth violence through their research. Using the insights from their research the team are building campaigns to demand better opportunities, housing, and an education system that works for all young people, to help tackle the root causes of youth violence locally.

Being young shouldn't be this dangerous. Together, we're organising for the safety we deserve.

Opportunities

Without a leg up, intergenerational poverty will continue to pull down the chances of young people in Lambeth. While we've seen the area change and certain businesses thrive, many of the benefits of regeneration are not being felt by families who have lived here all their lives. It forces young people to ask: who is this regeneration for? We ask: how can we ensure we benefit from regeneration?

1. No more regeneration without opportunities for us.

The benefits of regeneration are not felt equally, often cutting out long-time and low-income residents. In turn this depends local inequality and access to opportunities. With a new approach to development, the benefits can be spread further.

What this could look like

- Require social benefit clauses within planning permission to ensure development and construction creates jobs for young people.
- Ensure that any redevelopment or development site has a percentage of Section 106 money ring-fenced for youth services, and co-design how it is spent with young people.

2. Jobs with local businesses.

While business might appear to be booming in Lambeth, few businesses hire young people on a good wage. Having good opportunities available reduces the pull of illicit ways of making money.

What this could look like

- Work with a representative group of young people on creating incentives for local businesses to employ local young people.
- Clear opportunities for young people (16+) to gain part-time jobs with employers.
- Launch a website to advertise local jobs with specific roles suitable for young people.

3. Consistent & accessible guidance & support.

Well designed and high- quality guidance, advice and mentoring can make an enormous difference to life outcomes of young people, creating opportunities for otherwise unattainable life paths.

What this could look like

- High quality career advice for all 16-18 year olds in school and community settings.
- Introduce "Best Mentoring Programme" to Lambeth Made Business Charter Awards.
- Involve young people in grant-making processes for designing and administering funding for youth services.

4. Educate young people on how to make and keep money.

Modules of financial education in state schools barely scratch the surface, leaving young people unprepared for life beyond the classroom. A good foundation on the basics of finance and business will give young people the knowledge to better take advantage of opportunities when they do arrive.

What this could look like

- Provide a module on personal finance and entrepreneurship to all school students between years 9 and 11, delivered and designed by accredited financial literacy organisations

Housing

Home is where the heart is, but when your estate is under-invested, damp and crowded, how are you supposed to feel about your place in society? Unsafe housing, rising rents and living costs, and a lack of good quality youth provision create conditions for people to find supplementary income on the road, or simply lower their ambitions. Whether you're a social or private tenant, or a homeowner, housing policy must prioritise resident wellbeing.

5. Safe and decent homes for all.

Poor quality housing is a significant cause of stress for many families, and young people are no exception. Homes should feel safe, problems should be fixed properly and quickly, and landlords should be accountable.

What this could look like

- Work with resident groups on a new enforcement strategy.
- An end to damp and mouldy social housing estates.
- Publicise housing advice surgeries within schools, and provide housing surgeries at accessible times.

6. Properly funded youth provision.

The gutting of Council-run youth services has led to charities having to pick up the pieces and hold it together. Yet there is inadequate funding available to keep these services performing to the standard required, and a lack of local services can direct young people into neighbourhoods where they face danger.

What this could look like

- Regular structured and supervised after-school youth provision on or near social housing.
- Involve young people in grant-making processes for youth provision.

7. No more regeneration without our input.

Many housing developments have been designed with maximum efficiency as the highest priority, and feature many instances of poor planning and hostile architecture. Going forward, having a youth and resident voice in aspects of design will be essential.

What this could look like

- Commit to support resident co-design of any development of 10 dwellings or more, including a representative group of young people paid at London Living Wage.
- Protect good existing local youth organisations and their spaces from redevelopment.

8. Support with the cost of living.

The cost of living crisis will only add further pressure on young people to seek out illicit ways of making money, and become entangled in the cycle of violence. Stronger support, and better accessibility for what already exists, may make the difference to stay out of trouble.

What this could look like

- Provide weekly food shopping vouchers for all families with children who are eligible for free school meals.
- An end to energy inefficient homes.
- Schools communicate and signpost local cost of living support, both statutory and voluntary, in different media and languages.

Education

When a young person's first contact with school is shaped by a lack of understanding and even rejection, it can lead them down a path of someone who has learned that they are disposable, or at least incompatible with mainstream education. What might an education system look like if it were to more proactively support young people at the start, before it gets harder to change the path they're heading down?

9. An emphasis on support, not just discipline.

Fixed term exclusions and placement in alternative provision has been proven to lead to further abandonment by the system, and a higher probability of entering the criminal justice system. Other local authorities and schools have committed to finding alternatives, and Lambeth should be no exception.

What this could look like

- Make a public commitment, like our neighbours in Southwark, to reduce exclusions to as close to zero as possible.
- Provide advice, training and support to young people and families affected by school exclusions and off-rolling.

10. School staff who treat us as individuals and understand our lives.

Many neurodiverse pupils and those with adverse childhood experiences are less likely to receive the support that could get them through school. A better understanding of their needs, at an earlier stage, will benefit their chances of staying within the system and completing education.

What this could look like

- Independent counselling and support for pupils struggling with mental health, including 1 to 1 counselling, group work, or even a family practitioner.
- Ensure all school staff are fully trained in identifying learning difficulties, neurodivergence, and disability, with policies specifying how families or individuals can refer in for screening or support.

11. An education system that works for us.

Schools often lack transparency about issues that come up between students and/or staff, and in particular about the action being taken. Addressing these processes would improve trust between students, parents, and school staff.

What this could look like

- Issue a simple communication explaining the complaints process for your school, and commit to all formal complaints receiving a written response.
- Teachers, students and parents to help shape school accountability efforts.

12. Commitment to anti-racism & anti-discrimination.

Racism and discrimination within schools has been shown to be a contributing factor to alienation from mainstream education. Anti-racist reforms have been claimed by many schools, however the execution of these intentions can often be left wanting.

What this could look like

- Commit to at least annual evaluation of how your schools is implementing your anti-racist and anti-discrimination policies.
- Commit to developing curriculum modules which more accurately reflect the Black and Brown contribution throughout history, literature and science, which schools can be encouraged to adopt.

If you have the means to reduce violence, LPAC have the vision.

Let's talk.



Contact us at lambethpac.com and tell us how you think you could help.

Funders



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