

Community Safety Audit Training Brunswick Estate, Islington, London

A group of women living and working on the Brunswick Estate undertook Community Safety Audit Training to assess and improve community safety of their neighbourhood during November 2004 to January 2005. The Brunswick Estate is in Islington, London in the EC1 New Deal for Communities catchment area, an area identified for Neighbourhood Renewal offering an opportunity for the group to directly engage in and influence improvements to their area.



Audit Group Members recording observations on location

Some quotes on the skills learnt:

- 'Learning the difference between design features and amenities or facilities'
- 'I learnt about design'
- 'I learnt amenity is also a help point like a shop or the university'
- 'To use camera...never used camera before to make pictures!'
- 'Using the Dictaphone...'
- 'When we interviewed the Policeman!'
- 'Surprising that women will let you stop them in the street and talk to you!'

Some observations and discoveries made:

- 'It opened my eyes...I don't come to this side of the estate (back of Harold Laski Court) as I live on St John's...I heard it was dark but until we monitored it, I didn't realise how much in the evening!'
- 'Finding out more about the area'
- 'Didn't know where Malta Street was, never been there...now I do!'
- 'The cleanliness of the estate...graffiti free!'
- 'When interviewed the first lady...because of what she tell me about rape...'

Participants of the Brunswick Estate Community Safety Audit

Three observation points on the Brunswick Estate, Islington, London

1. Berry Place

An observation point repeatedly cited as unsafe and to be avoided where possible by the Audit Group and passers by interviewed. Community safety issues cited include; poor lighting, overgrown shrubs, high walls and poor natural surveillance with women and men pedestrians equally using the pathway in the morning but men outnumbering women by 4:1 in the afternoon and 2:1 in the evening.



Berry Place: at best an alleyway by day, and a 'blind spot' or trap by night

2. Northampton Square / Tompion Street

Community safety issues cited, poorly lit at night with poor surveillance after University closes for the day.



A sexual assault took place at Northampton Square during the period of the Audit

'Sometimes at night time its scary...when you're walking on your own and someone comes up behind you and you don't know who it is...'

Group of 5 girls, White, mid teens

3. Percival Street / Malta Street

Community safety issues cited include; poorly lit pedestrian route with heavy traffic at high speeds and parked cars creating 'blind spots' making it unsafe and difficult to cross the road. Noted also as well known 'youth hanging out' hotspot.

'The biggest problem with the fear of crime is street lighting.

If you come down here of an evening...the lighting here {Percival Street} is horrendous...Its a lot quieter down there at the moment while Tompion Park Youth Club is open but when that closes half nine/ten a clock at night...they're on the street and a few hang around they [women and older people] look and they see a number [of youth] hanging around...they're not actually doing anything but with the low light and they're all dressed the same...I can understand peoples fear.'

Barry Leach Community Beat Officer

The Aggregate Record Sheet recorded a marked downward decline in the use of the area by women throughout the day. Although women and men pedestrians more or less equally used the area in the morning, by evening men outnumbered women by almost 5.5 to 1. When following up the reason behind this trend during interviews, personal accounts of harassment by groups of children/youth, drew a clear picture of a real and profound fear:

'When it starts to get dark...sometimes I've had a couple of men shout over and follow me up the road in their cars...so I don't feel safe here at all really '

White woman in late teens

'Kids chuck eggs...and cans on you.....even fireworks...on Percival Street'

White woman late 20's

'You got kids hanging around and going up and down on the motorbike screaming abuse'

Black woman of African/Caribbean descent, 30-40 with 4 children under 13 whose 10 year-old son was chased by a group of 10 or more youth.

Comparative interview about the same space with a male pedestrian

Audit Group Member: 'Are there any times when you don't feel safe?'

Man: 'No must admit there hasn't been. I saw a lot of police out here the other night but personally I don't have any problems....Should I be worried?' [Laughs]

Some benefits to participating in the Audit Training processes

'The Audit has enabled me to pinpoint and examine that I don't feel quite so bad about the area as a whole and to highlight the suspect areas to avoid at certain times of the day because of bushes and bad lighting,'

White woman, some visual impairment 65+

'Before shy to speak English...when I had problem in my flat, Council say 'don't understand'.. make me ashamed to speak ...now no! Understand a lot now...it's been very very good...this give me confidence!'

Audit Group Member late 20's with two young children