

# Safety in Northmoor

## Northmoor Road Community Safety Audit Women's Group Interim Report — September 2003



Tunnel connecting Parry Road with Stockport Road



A group of 8 women from the Northmoor Road area took part in a Community Safety Audit with Making Safer Places Project. Eleven two-hour sessions were held at the Northmoor Community Centre on Thursday afternoons from June to September 2003.

The Northmoor Road area is in Longsight, Manchester and is within the Stockport Road Corridor Single Regeneration Budget scheme. The area is mainly terraced housing and a number of the streets have been developed into HomeZones. There is a mix of social and private housing.

## Community Safety Audit Training – The Process

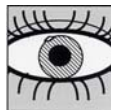
A community safety audit assesses community safety in an area. The audit involves 7 activities which focus on:



1. **Discussion:** to consider the ways that the design of a local area may affect a sense of personal safety and quality of life, and where the group may want to do an audit.



2. **Mapping:** to encourage the group to become familiar with making and looking at maps, models and plans, and to use these skills to identify ways to improve the area.



3. **Observation:** to enable the group to note and assess design and other features that may contribute to the perception and experience of community safety at a particular place and time.



4. **Recording:** to document observations made by the group during the audit in order to analyse and present the findings at a later stage.



5. **Analysis:** to select and prioritise the features identified during the audit as needing to change to make the area safer.



6. **Presentation:** to present audit findings clearly and effectively, to raise community awareness of safety issues and to gain support for specific proposals for change.



7. **Implementation:** to gain support for audit recommendations from policy and decision-makers for improvements and to heighten the sense and level of community safety in the local area.

### 1. Discussion

Key community safety issues for the group were:

- **Quiet/empty streets at night**, get afraid walking in the evening, coming out of community centre at night
- **Young children/men/women hanging** around, standing at street corners and using bad words
- **Fear of being mugged** due to drug addicts walking about
- **Back lanes** – items dumped in them and people hanging around
- **Fast cars** speeding down Northmoor Road
- **Wasteground spots** – dirty needles, etc
- **Tunnel dark and dirty, dark footpaths** – hiding places along footpaths



## 2 Mapping

The group created mind maps, to show routes they do and don't use. They were able to identify how people, perceptions and the physical environment made them feel safe and unsafe in the area:

- **Ethnicity** – the Asian group members felt more vulnerable in some areas on the basis that they might be victims of racial harassment
- **Experience** – it was noted that personal experience of crime/anti-social behaviour can make women more sensitive/aware of risks, e.g. man exposing himself in Crowcroft park had made some Asian women less willing to go there
- **Personal needs** – mothers with young children had expressed concerns about the Home Zone areas where there is no level difference between the pavement and road
- **Feeling vulnerable** – people's feeling that they might be more vulnerable to attack on the basis of age, race, gender
- **Difficulty in communicating** – this was a particular issue for women that spoke very limited or no English, because it was difficult for them to ask for help and to understand what was going on around them.
- **Who knows you and who you know** – those that felt well-known in the area, knew where to go for help.
- **Frequent use** – Women felt safer on the routes they used the most, e.g. the school run, route to the shops
- **Blind spots and blocked junctions** – Women felt safer when they knew what was coming
- **Places where young people congregate**

## 3 Observation

The group chose 5 observation points for their audit, which reflected their community safety concerns:

1. Crowcroft Park play area
2. Alleyway behind Grainger Avenue
3. Alleyway between Hopkins and Hatton Streets
4. Corner of Northmoor Road and Elgar Street
5. Pedestrian Tunnel connecting Parry road and Stockport Road

**“ It was nice talking to the people, everyone was interested in what we were doing ”**

Project participant



## 4 Recording

The group rated the design features (lighting, blind spots, play areas, landscaping & planting, traffic flow & parking, litter/vandalism/graffiti and help points) and the level of people activity at the 5 observation points at different times of the day.

Some benefits of doing the audit were:

- Learning to use a camera
- Discovering that I am quite a good photographer
- Working in a group
- Learning how to do an audit
- Had quite a laugh, whilst trying to count the number people around
- Spending time with other members of the audit group
- Sharing a cup of coffee whilst waiting for the rain to stop



## 5 Analysis

The group analysed all the observations points, and then decided to focus on two which are well used in the community:

- Northmoor road
- Tunnel between Parry Road and Stockport Road

They came up with some ideas for improvements with help from Community Technical Aid Centre (CTAC) and Manchester Engineering Design Consultancy (MEDC).

### Northmoor road

#### **Issues:**

- Double parking and corner parking - creates blind spots, blocks pavement for wheelchair and buggy users, unsafe for children crossing
- No clear bus-stop area – buses stop in the middle of the road, confusing signs
- No pedestrian crossing - for people using the shops and school children
- Speeding traffic
- Dominated by young people at night



#### **Solutions**

1. Designated parking – residents parking, use bollards and pull-ins, resurface damaged footpaths
2. Pedestrian crossing – Improve traffic flow with a signalled crossing, signage on speed limits, use plateaus to lower speeds
3. Clearer bus stop areas - no parking area at bus stops, erect a bus stop for buses to town

## Tunnel

### Issues:

- Litter and vandalism – bad litter problem, inside is damaged by vandalism
- Badly lit – entrances and inside (especially in the daytime)
- Entrance barriers are damaged
- Overgrown plants around tunnel entrances
- Overgrown path leading to tunnel - ideal for muggings and quick getaways
- Underused by women—5 times as many men use the tunnel as women



### Solutions

1. Brighten up the tunnel – Use brighter (halogen) lighting inside, and stronger lighting at the entrances and footpath next to playing field, clean/pave brickwork inside
2. Reduce the Litter/vandalism – Provide litter bins, strengthen barriers to entrance, establish regular maintenance programme
3. Landscaping– cutting back and removing the knotweed, better landscaping of the embankments

It was noted that some of these things can be done fairly quickly, within the community and that others are more long-term and need support from the council.



**“ All being together worked well ”**

Project participant

## Community activities

The group also wanted to see more community activities to address fear of crime and perceptions that younger people commit crime:

### Solutions

1. More evening activities
2. Organised journeys to and from evening community events
3. Community projects which improve understanding between the young and old

**“ The work has been more relaxed and got better as we ’ ve gone on ”**

Project participant

## **6 Presentation**

The group designed a simple presentation showing the key community issues and consulting on possible solutions. This was first used at the Crowcroft Park Festival on 24th August 2003.

Women voted as follows:

	Tunnel			Northmoor road		
	Lighten	Litter	Foliage	Parking	Crossing	Bus
<b>Young women</b>	8	1	1	0	13	0
<b>Middle aged women</b>	5	5	4	4	6	0
<b>Older women</b>	3	5	4	4	4	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	16	11	9	8	13	0

The group also presented their findings at the HomeZones Street Party on 21 September and received strong support for the recommendations from local residents .

The group has been invited to make presentations, facilitate workshops, attend and submit articles for a range of local events:

1. Longsight Levenshulme Local Action Partnership (Manchester City Council) meeting – October date to be confirmed
2. Longsight Ward Performance Panel Meeting, Longsight Library - 21 October 2003
3. Homezones Street Party - 21 September 2003
4. Valuing Gender in Regeneration conference (Oxfam & Women's Design Service) - 15 October 2003, Mechanics Centre
5. Making Safer Places launch in Bristol – late September 2003
6. Northmoor News next issue - October 2003
7. Manchester Methodist Housing Group Tenants Newsletter - September 2003

## **7 Implementation - The Challenge**

The audit group now needs to join with other groups and projects in Manchester to think creatively about how Northmoor Road and the tunnel can be made a safer place for women residents in particular, and the wider community.

Other relevant groups/activities in the area include:

Friends of the Earth  
 Saathi Asian Women's Group  
 Wenda's coffee mornings  
 Eden Project  
 Northmoor Community Association

The group will need to work out how they campaign, lobby and advocate for improvements in the area.



**“ It will be nice to get more support ”**

Project participant

## **Profile of the Group**

The group of women come from a range of different backgrounds and are aged from 30s to 60 plus. The Neighbourhood Renewal Community Link Worker, Zoe Goddard, also attended the training to give additional support to the group.

- **Ethnicity:** 2 Pakistani, 3 White British, 2 Indian, 1 Black African
- **Age:** 4 women are aged 25-39, 3 women are aged 40-64, 1 woman is over 65

**For more information about the Northmoor Road Audit contact  
Liz Sprenger on 0161 225 6040 or  
Naseem Butt (also speaks Urdu) on 0161 256 2617.**

## **Background on Making Safer Places and Women's Design Service**

Making Safer Places is one of the projects run by Women's Design Service. It is a community safety project run by and for women. The project aims to improve community safety by working with groups of local women to develop their skills and knowledge in assessing and improving the design, access and facilities in their neighbourhoods. Making Safer Places is working in Manchester, Bristol and London. In Manchester the project partner is Manchester City Council. Making Safer Places is funded by the Community Fund.

Women's Design Service has developed a community safety audit tool, in use since 1996, to enable community members to assess the level of safety in the area in which they live, work and play. It helps them to identify factors that make a place feel safe or unsafe and to recommend how and what should be changed.

Women's Design Service was established in 1987 and has produced a range of publications based on action research projects.

For more information about Making Safer Places and Women's Design Service contact  
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