

## **SCRUTINY REVIEW – KNIFE CRIME, MOBILE PHONE THEFT ETC. – VISIT TO NEW HORIZONS CENTRE– FRIDAY 15 JANUARY 2016**

Present: Councillors: Troy Gallagher  
Una O'Halloran  
Jenny Kay  
Caroline Russell  
Clare Jeapes

Peter Moore – Scrutiny officer -Islington  
Catherine Briody – CSU Islington  
Shelagh O'Connor – Chief Executive Officer New  
Horizons  
Kate Bond – Positive Futures Co-ordinator New  
Horizons

Shelagh O'Connor welcomed Members to the Centre

During the visit the following main points were made –

- The Centre had been founded in 1967 by Lord Longford and the family continued to support the Centre
- The Centre is open during the week and at weekends
- Most young people that came to the Centre were homeless and the Centre is also used as a drop in centre where young people are assisted in trying to find employment and accommodation etc.
- It is getting more difficult for young people to access accommodation with the high level of shortage of housing across London and the majority of young people were usually either working, on benefits or at college
- There is core group at the centre of 18-21 year olds, however this can rise to 25 and there is a partnership with 6 London Boroughs including Islington to identify housing
- Local Authorities were finding it increasingly difficult to provide suitable housing and this would become increasingly difficult when benefit changes came into place for 18-21 year olds
- Counselling is available at the Centre 2 days per week and there is a nurse and laundry on the site which young people can access together with an advice centre
- There is an accelerated programme to assist NEET's
- There were 38 full and part time staff employed at the Centre and there is also a volunteer programme in place and work is carried out with colleges for young people to volunteer with their work evidenced to the College
- There is a 75% success rate in getting volunteer workers into employment and a number of staff currently working at the Centre came through the volunteer programme

- The Centre linked into the Somers Town Neighbourhood Group and CRIC and there had been funding from a S106 agreement to fund a healthy living centre in the area as Somers Town had high levels of deprivation and unemployment and there were links with local businesses to try to access employment opportunities through the Somers Town Neighbourhood Project/ Young people often needed 1:1 support to assist them in accessing employment
- Work is also carried with women involved with prostitution to provide assistance to them to move away from prostitution and in moving away from drug dependence
- Funding had been granted by the Big Lottery Fund and work will be taking place Pan London with Islington and Hackney involvement as to young people and gang affiliations and there is also an outreach facility at the centre
- Over the past 3 years the Centre had dealt with young people referred from Youth Offending and were currently dealing with offenders from Islington gangs and young people also self referred
- Some young people who wished to move away from gangs needed relocating as it was not safe for them to remain in the area and there is a problem with many of these young people suffering from mental health problems
- There needed to be a long term approach taken with regard to combating knife crime and there were a number of challenges such as the cross borough nature and the sums of money involved in drug dealing and it is an ever changing picture
- It was stated that it is hoped that the MOPAC strategy being developed would adopt a more Pan London strategy and a more holistic approach taken to support young people and enforcement action also being taken where necessary
- Reference was made to the Easy Cash gang that operated in EC1 and that Centre workers did visit gang members in prison every 2 weeks if they are in a London prison and 4 weekly if outside London with a view to discussing alternative lifestyles and if necessary try to find accommodation outside of their area if at risk of gang association
- There needed to be more co-ordinated provision across boroughs to target young people to enable them to access employment opportunities
- Reference was made to the fact that there needed to be affordable youth provision, leisure facilities etc. to enable young people to access these and avoid drifting into criminality

The Chair thanked Shelagh O'Connor and Kate Bond and stated that if Members had any further questions they should contact the scrutiny clerk who could raise them with the Centre