

A photograph of a white truck with the number '1843' on its side. Two people wearing high-visibility yellow vests are standing in front of the truck. The background shows a street with other vehicles and trees.

Young People's Safer Accessibility Project (Streets Ahead On Safety)

Richard Kimberlee
April 2007

Acknowledgements

There are many people I would like to thank for their help and assistance in the delivery of this project. In particular the 405 young people who enjoyed learning about road safety, undertaking environmental audits of the streets around their school and participating in decision making on the *Streets Ahead on Safety* (SAOS) project. All the photographs in this report were taken by them. Secondly, I would like to thank the four participating schools, in particular their heads, teachers, teaching assistants and dinner ladies at: St. Saviour's Church of England Primary School, Somerville Primary School, Thornton Junior School and Marlborough Junior School who helped to support the young people in their work and provide assistance on the Activity Days. Thirdly, I acknowledge that the success of this project has been dependent on a partnership of hard working and committed professionals. In particular I would also like to acknowledge the support of Professor Liz Towner for her ideas and help on the Activity Days. The School Travel Plan Officers from Birmingham City Council and in particular Mandi Slater, Helen Budge and Sinead Stephens who worked hard to build on their links with the schools and provide contributions to the project's development. Also the engineers Craig Newton and Claire Bolan who came out into the community to listen to and engage with their service users: the young people. Their patience and understanding was warmly welcomed by the schools and the young people who enjoyed their commitment to improving the area. Also, we must thank Neil Cambridge from Birmingham City Council for his hard work in developing the very exciting 3-D graphic presentations of the engineer's designs. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the support and generosity of the Department for Transport in furnishing free gifts for a goodie bag. These were unanticipated by the young people but very much appreciated and enjoyed.

(Frontispiece: Lorry drivers sitting in their cab eating their lunch with their engine running and partially blocking the pavement where children are trying to cross a junction)

Contents



Danger Live Wires! One of several examples

Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Contents	4
Executive Summary	5
Background	12
Activity Day	20
The data (<i>What young people said</i>)	28
Outcomes for young people	39
Conclusions	47
Recommendations	56
References	59
Appendix 1: Abbreviations	64
Appendix 2: Evaluation Questionnaire	65
Appendix 3: Hart's Ladder of Participation	66

Executive Summary

Roadworks were a continuing problem...but so is road work paraphernalia!

Executive Summary

Background

The Young People's Safer Accessibility Project (YPSAP) sought to enact Birmingham City Council's (BCC) intention to make the Streets Ahead on Safety project (SAOS) a *bottom up* community led project.

Young people under 16 year olds make up 33% of the SAOS project area's population (England and Wales 20%) making them significant stakeholders for the project; afterall, they are likely to spend more time in the community than their parents.

This YPSAP was not about consultation instead it implementing a Child Rights based approach to engaging young people in decision making.

Young people's participation is enshrined in national policy and it is also a declared goal of BCC and therefore extends its policy of localisation and engagement.

Evidence suggests that through effective participatory strategies community and regeneration programmes can: benefit from participant's innovative ideas; more effectively tackle exclusion; ensure service providers better understand service users needs; empower planners and service providers to develop effective planning and design and provide local opportunities for local communities to benefit from subsidiary outcomes.

Involving young people in decision making is seen as a vital strategy for enabling local service providers to meet their strategic aims of *being healthy* and *staying safe* as outlined in the *Every Child Matters* agenda.

Activity Days

This project was based on a partnership between School Travel Plan Officers, Engineers, Road Safety Officers, and the Heads and Teachers of four primary schools and 405 young people aged 9-11 years.

Although it is accepted that contacting and engaging young people in community based activities is difficult the prime aim of the YPSAP was to develop effective methods of working with groups of young people for the purpose of promoting road safety and improving community safety.

This project delivered exciting participatory activities based around four core elements: promotion of road safety knowledge; an environmental audit; citizenship training and active user-engagement with proposed engineering plans.

The Activity Days prepared young people for participation in decision making and meeting service providers prior to voting on elements of suggested engineering proposals designed for the SAOS project.

Like all community based projects that engage young people we sought young people's and their parent's permission to participate in the project. Opt-in letters outlining aims of the project and the format of Activity Days were sent to parents. There were no withdrawals, but two parents objected to their children participating in photographic work.

It was extremely difficult to plan optimum times to run our Activity Days. The need to fit in with school curricula and other programmes proved challenging but our effective and long term planning for roll out was impeded by changes to the broader SAOS consultation plan.

The Data (What young people said)

A key part of the Activity Day was an environmental audit which enabled young people to explore their local community and collect data on community and road safety issues in the immediate vicinity of their school.

Contrary to the photographic evidence shown in this report young people preferred to live in a community that was clean and tidy and they highly valued increased security measures like CCTV and police on their streets.

They were ambivalent about cars. Although some expressed delight about the presence of limousines many expressed dismay about cars that were noisy and polluting.

Young people did not like buses and many believed it was a mode of transport only suitable for 'low lifes'.

This report documents many of the numerous environmental problems and road safety issues faced by young people in their local community e.g. hazardous gas canisters stock piled on pavements, electrical live wire exposure, fly-tipping, dog mess, illegal parking etc.

All of this information was sent to the SAOS project lead, the engineers and elected city councillors. At the time of writing only certain issues have been addressed, primarily those that directly impinged on engineering plans. The other salient environmental issues remain unaddressed.

During the citizenship training young people identified a range of actions that they and their families could take to improve their own safety. They also developed suggestions for their school council, police, city council and shopkeepers to consider.

One of the striking discoveries of this project was the degree to which car and pedestrian accidents impact on young people's awareness and memories. In every class we visited several young people could recall an accident that a family member or peer had been involved with and the problems this caused.

Outcomes for young people

One of the key outcomes of the day was that young people felt they were involved in an important community project.

Contrary to much road safety activity which leave young people disinterested, feedback sheets from participants and teachers suggest that everyone had fun, self esteem for young participants was enhanced and important lessons on road safety were learnt through experiential witnessing during the environment audit and the utilization of the innovative Quizdom technique.

Local School Councils have an enhanced role to discuss and address local, environmental and transport issues.

For the first time 405 young people's have been invited to engage and participate in an important project that will affect both them and their community. Never before have these young people been treated as stakeholders for the purposes of decision making in the communities where they live.

Enhanced links between Birmingham City Council's Road Safety Department and local schools has been achieved leading to the delivery of more road safety training in the future.

Road safety and school travel plan staff have experienced an opportunity to learn participatory techniques and elements of citizen training. Also one additional school has got involved with the School Travel Plan process.

Engaging young people in the SAOS project has empowered young people to offer engineers new ideas to be considered for incorporation in design.

Through environmental audits young people have been able to highlight to local governance structures: environmental issues, hazardous and dangerous practices by shopkeepers, poor signage and accident damaged street furniture and road/community safety problems that affect their community.

We have documented young people's almost universal experience of road accidents. Every class knows someone who has recently been killed or seriously injured in a car or pedestrian accident.

Conclusions

The recent Power Commission (2006) has argued that rather than expect everyone to participate equally in formal governance, we should try to make people's everyday civic engagement count by designing formal structures of governance in a way that taps into the informal spaces of community life that people routinely inhabit. The YPSAP followed this recommendation.

This report demonstrates the growing importance and emphasis placed on participation by policy makers.

In SAOS project area the extent of exclusionary dynamics indicated by deprivation indicators encourages us to endorse the view taken by BCC that a *bottom up approach* should be adopted because it is now broadly accepted that *participation of young people in decisions and actions at local and regional levels is essential if we are to build more democratic, inclusive and prosperous societies* (Council of Europe 2003).

Through our use of innovative technology, environmental audits, citizenship training and service user/provider sessions 405 young people were effectively engaged with the SAOS project and enthusiasm for involvement in decision making was generated.

The Team worked extraordinary hard to deliver these participatory activities and could have provided volunteer young people to engage in any active decision making process intended to be delivered for the planned *bottom up* approach espoused in the initial bid.

As well as learning how to vocalise their ideas young people's experience of citizenship training has enabled them to identify a range of actions that they and their families could undertake in order to improve their own safety and enhance their local environment.

The success of the YPSAP has meant that it frequently hosted several visitors to its Activity Days. The techniques used have been highlighted at national (and shortly international) forums and members of the Team have continued to advocate for young people's continuing involvement to: the project management team, local councillors and the Hodge Hill Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership.

Young people worked hard and imaginatively to inform the project about safety issues in their local area but young people still await a response from the project as to how or if these problems have/are going to be addressed.

A Child Rights based approach was adopted in the YPSAP but in its development we encountered key barriers to young people's successful engagement including: resistance from service providers, the failure of adults to perceive young people as major stakeholders and broad cynicism about the value of consultation in the community.

In fact beyond the Team the degree to which young people's participation is accepted or even recognised and valued as an important contribution to project development is still very unclear.

Decision makers have little expectation that young people should be included in decision making and yet despite being major users of public space it is still uncertain whether their '*right to a voice*' in community discourses can be given equivalence in policy making terms as adult car owners (Grayling et al 2000).

Without continued and sustained engagement with young people the risk in the SAOS project area is that young people may increasingly feel that their public spaces are becoming too dangerous and they and their parents may contribute towards a continuing demise in public and communal activity leading to resultant increases in isolation and obesity, an issue that tends to affects poorer communities across Europe (Cavill, et al 2006, p. v).

As we await the outcome of adult decision making processes to see the extent to which young people's views are included in decision making we can only say that local young people's participation on the SAOS project can thus far be best described as achieving level 3 ('*tokenistic*') on the *Ladder of Participation* (Hart, 1992) adopted in the NYA/LGA model (See Appendix 3). However there is still potential to achieve Level 6 (*Adult initiated-shared decision*) if it creates space to include and feedback on the views they have expressed.

To a large extent this degree of involvement is typical of post war urban policy, where children's needs and expectations within their communities have largely tended to be ignored, thwarted or obscured in the past (Matthews, 2001). It would be a shame to continue the trend here when enthusiasm for involvement with this project has been so very apparent from the schools and young people.

What is now required is that the SAOS project needs to develop effective ways to ensure that young people's ideas are integrated into the decision making processes and that their ideas are effectively and transparently integrated into the planning process.

We would like to think that Horelli's (1998) prognosis: *that the outcomes of young people's engagement are often unclear and that experience suggests that implementation of children's ideas remain dependent on the institutional arrangements of adults and the cultural and political climate of the locality*; would remain largely untrue for the SAOS project.

Recommendations

- This report should be included in any presentation to the BCC cabinet member with responsibility for transport and regeneration.

- The issues highlighted through the environmental audits conducted by young people almost a year ago should have a response.
- The SAOS project should clearly specify how and when it is going to feedback to the young people and the schools the outcomes and consequences of their engagement in participatory processes.
- Feedback is important for maintaining accountability and legitimacy. Therefore something more than a newsletter needs to be considered to avoid reinforcing existing cynicism.
- Young people's participation in decision making needs to be encouraged. The Highways Department needs to consider how their planning processes can evolve to include young people in decision making processes.
- Participation is not consultation. The imaginative examples used here (and others) should be incorporated into policy making processes. Empowering young people to be effective decision makers means that in the long run: they are more likely to learn about rights and responsibilities, understand more effectively the complexities involved in decision making and more readily identify with local plans for change. In the long run this will reduce exclusion and prevent an attitude of indifference to local governance from emerging.
- Young people's antipathy towards buses is broad. The Highways Department, the West Midlands Passenger Transport Authority, CENTRO and the bus companies need to urgently consider strategies that involve young people in rehabilitating the image of the bus and addressing young people's concern about personal safety.
- Road accidents and pedestrian injury are reported here to be a normal feature of young people's experience of living in the SAOS project area. The extent of trauma can only be guessed at but urgent research is required: to assess young people's understanding of accidents and injury; understand the impact they have on young people's transport choice and safety behaviour; and explore effective methods for enabling schools to deal with death and injury that occur in their neighbourhood.

Background



Going to school can be an obstacle course

The Project

In 2002, the Department for Transport (DfT) awarded Birmingham City Council (BCC) £6.1million to spend on improving road safety and the quality of life in an area of multiple deprivation, where 87,000 people from largely Asian, immigrant, backgrounds live. A third of the project area's population are under 16 and 58% self define their religion as Muslim. The area endures over 400 traffic accidents causing injuries each year. The costs of these accidents, in terms of: time off work, absence from school, pressure on the National Health Service and other emergency services and damage to property, is estimated to be £28million a year. In the six years before the project's commencement there were 16 fatalities including 3 children under 16 (Crimson et al, 2004). More recent figures suggest that between 2001 and 2005 there were on average of 56 child pedestrian accidents per year in the SOAS project area which gives an average of 2.18 child pedestrian accidents per 1000 of the child population. This is extraordinarily high compared to the Birmingham wide level of accidents (0.3 accidents/1000 of the child population) and almost eleven times greater (0.2 accidents/1000 of the child population) than the English average (Atkins, 2007). Children living in deprived areas are known to be particularly vulnerable to accidents and injury because they are more dependent on their immediate localities than adults, have limited income, constrained travel opportunities and are less susceptible to social control.

At the time the project was called the Inner City Safety Demonstration Project, but it was later re-branded to the *Streets Ahead on Safety* (SAOS). The main objectives of the project were:

- To have a measurable impact on road safety in actual and perceived terms
- To integrate road safety activity into the regeneration and other agendas and build partnerships for delivery
- To secure inclusive engagement and participation with a diverse community and influence local views about road safety
- To improve accessibility to jobs, services, education, commercial and leisure opportunities
- To improve the quality of life; to create a safer, vibrant, more stable community with improved measures of social capital
- To provide a clear concise evaluation of the procedures and processes engaged upon throughout the Project and to record in the form of a set of Guidelines of Best Practice for the future benefit of other Local Authorities.

(BCC Transportation Strategy, 2005)

The SAOS project sought to develop a broad based partnership approach to deliver casualty reduction and improved quality of life for people living in the

project area. The opening statement of the council's bid declared that it would deliver a *bottom up* approach. With a target population of 75,000 people from diverse ethnic and social backgrounds the challenge to develop a successful *bottom up* approach was seen to be undoubtedly tremendous (Kimberlee, 2005). Nevertheless the Young People's Safer Accessibility Project (YPSAP) sought to develop a *bottom up* approach to engage young people. This was important because young people are significant stakeholders in the local community: 33% of the population are under 16 compared to just 20% for England and Wales (Crinson, 2004). Thus the SAOS project provided an opportunity for us to implement a Child Rights based approach to engage young people in decision making. This was not about consultation. It was an explicit attempt to engage young people in participation around the decision making structures generated for the project.

Consultation entails asking children about their views. Participation refers to the extent of children's involvement in decision-making.
(Borland et al 2001: Executive summary)

Why involve young people?

In many Western societies institutional arrangements and legal frameworks tend to relegate children to a state of incompetence, such that their skills, talents etc. often remain unrealised and overlooked. Although they are sometimes viewed as apprentice citizens their confidence and competence is rarely fostered sufficiently to permit them to be active stakeholders in local communities. We know that unfortunately, young people's views and opinions are less likely to be consistently collected when regeneration and community development programmes are planned (Matthews, 2001). But practically, morally and increasingly legally they should.

The UK is a signatory to the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which enshrines in international law a child's right to protection, provision and participation. Article 12 clearly states that children and young people should have their opinions taken into account in all major decisions affecting their lives. This has led to increasing attempts to promote their participation. Youth participation has many forms, from school councils to youth forums; from young board members on charitable trusts to simple surveys of their opinions. In the last decade, the participation of children and young people has been included in seven separate pieces of legislation in the UK, ranging from the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to the Children Act 2004. The involvement of young people in the government's work has been particularly important since the European Youth White Paper (2001) proclaimed a *Common Objective of more Youth Participation*.

The active participation of young people in decisions and actions at local and regional levels is essential if we are to build more democratic, inclusive and prosperous societies. Participation in the

democratic life of any community is about more than voting or standing for election ... Participation and active citizenship is about having the right, the means, the space, and the opportunity—and where necessary the support—to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society (Council of Europe 2003)

In response to these legal developments the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) completed a report on UK progress in 2005 and subsequently published guidance on pupil participation for schools and local authorities to consider entitled, *Working Together: Giving Children and Young People a Say* (2004). The voluntary and community sector have also been active in establishing a young people's shadow organization e.g. Young NCB. A national Youth Parliament (formed in 2001) now exists. And individual organizations (like the Children's Rights Alliance for England) have made young people full trustees on its Board of Management. However, within local government, with a few well organized exceptions (e.g. Devon County Council) local authorities continue to fail to recognize and support young people's participation. This is often because youth organizations and youth projects are given *limited resources including staff, funding and appropriate expertise* which limits the effectiveness (Middleton, 2006:186).

But there are clear and compelling reasons and benefits for engaging young people in participatory processes and this report highlights why this was important for the SAOS project:

- National policy
- BCC policy
- Provide innovation
- Tackle Exclusion
- More effected by the issue
- Ensure needs being met
- Develops their skills and confidence
- More effective data and planning
- International Comparisons

It is now national government policy to boost citizen participation particularly since the Power Commission reports that their Citizenship Survey reveals that the proportion of people in England and Wales who believe they cannot influence decisions affecting their local area increased from 57% to 62% between 2001 and 2003 (Power Commission, 2006). All government departments are now acting. In June 2005 the Civil Renewal Unit launched *Together We Can* a blueprint for empowering and enabling citizens and communities to have greater access to public bodies in order to help them to influence priorities, policies and *spending at a local level*. The aim is to move from a top-down model of governance towards a more horizontal distribution of power. The *Together We Can* programme revolves around a premise that,

in many cases, local citizens are only at best informed about problems and issues that afflict their localities. Instead it is felt that local authorities should seek to promote participation believing that it can help to target resources effectively. In addition, signatory government departments are expressing a desire to see their citizens become increasingly engaged in their political processes, and believe that if they are given increased access to public bodies as well as the means and methods of working collaboratively with local statutory authorities, *all of us will become more responsible, accountable and proud citizens*. Failure to adhere to this approach will mean that local people, particularly young people and people from minority ethnic communities, will continue to feel alienated from the local political process (The Power Commission, 2006:5).

Young people's expectation around participation has grown ever since the Crick (1998) report launched the process of teaching citizenship in schools. Citizenship education equips children and young people with the knowledge, understanding and skills to play an active part in our society as informed and critical citizens who are socially and morally responsible. It continues to aim to give them the confidence and conviction that they can act with others, have influence and make a difference in their communities. This project aimed to utilise these skills for practical effect.

It is clear that BCC also see participation and engagement of their citizens in decision making as vital to ensuring the city's future prosperity. Over the last few decades there has been a policy to increase the importance of local neighbourhoods. The move towards localisation of service delivery started in the early 1980s with the introduction of neighbourhood offices. '*Localisation and Devolution*' was introduced city wide in 2002, following the extensive work of the Democracy Commission led by Sir Adrian Cadbury. The rationale behind the policy was that although Birmingham had become highly successful in regenerating its City Centre (e.g. Centenary Square and the Bull Ring); the benefits of redevelopment were not necessarily spreading to surrounding neighbourhoods and least of all to areas like those covered by the SAOS project. Thus, subsequent city councils have continued to commit themselves to developing a City of '*flourishing neighbourhoods*', a commitment which was renamed by the new administration elected in 2004, to a City of '*vibrant urban villages!*' Despite the change of wording, the policy survives and explicitly demands increased citizen participation.

Clearly this extends to Birmingham's young people. BCC and its partners who make up the Birmingham Strategic Partnership have declared that youth participation should be embedded in all their activities:

Embed consultation and decision-making exercises for children and young people in all the activities of all partners. (Learning Culture and Policy Development, 2006)

Young people are important stakeholders. Thus it is now broadly accepted by policy makers and advisers that regeneration and community development initiatives are successful and are more likely to be sustained in the future when local communities are engaged.

'Renewal relies on local communities. It can also be greatly helped by their innovation and local knowledge' (SEU, 1998).

Regeneration initiatives and partnership working should therefore ensure that local people are actively involved in community regeneration. Thus, in order to '*promote the well-being of communities*', the government has challenged all local community partnerships to involve and include '*local people, individually and collectively through community groups*' (DETR, 1998). What is more: agencies who work with young people in the West Midlands extol the benefits of encouraging young people's participation.

There are huge benefits in engaging children and young people at all levels, and increasing opportunities and commitment to doing so. (Growing Up in the West Midlands conference 2005)

In fact it is now central to the *Every Child Matters* agenda which is affecting all local authorities and service providers working with the young. The Children's Workforce Reform Strategy (DfES, 2005) claims that the aim of government within the *Every Child Matters* agenda is to stimulate service providers into creating new ways of working with young service users. Over time it is predicted that the workforce delivering children's services will change considerably and a major thrust within the Strategy is to create new, generic roles that work across agency and professional boundaries, keeping the child or young person's needs as the central purpose. Thus the anticipation is that all services (including transportation) will have children as a focus and ensure they endeavour to work to the five objectives of:

1. **BEING HEALTHY:** enjoying good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle
2. **STAYING SAFE:** being protected from harm and neglect
3. **ENJOYING and ACHIEVING:** getting the most out of life and developing the skills for adulthood
4. **MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION:** being involved with the community and society and not engaging in anti-social or offending behavior
5. **ECONOMIC WELL-BEING:** not being prevented by economic disadvantage from achieving full potential in life.

We also know that participation is seen as an effective way of tackling exclusion. An early Policy Action Team report specifically concerned with young people stressed that far too many young people from deprived neighbourhoods (especially ethnic minority young people) found themselves destined for a life of underachievement and social exclusion. Engagement with local projects and regeneration initiatives were seen as one means of re-engaging those who were disaffected (SEU, 1999). It is therefore not surprising that DfES (2005) *Youth Matters* green paper encouraged youth services to develop strategies and seek out policies that engaged more young people in positive activities and empower them to become more participatory.

As well as exclusion the high level of child KSI is another prime reason why young people should have a stake in what is happening. We know that motorised traffic limits children's travel, and in particular their walking and cycling. This affects both their physical and social activities, contributing to obesity and a reduction in neighbourliness in the community as a whole (CAPT, 2006). Over the last 35 years, children's *ranges* (the distances that children are allowed to travel unaccompanied) have been severely restricted (Hillman, 1990). Where children can play out, both they and their parents tend to have more friends. But an absence of friends, together with a restriction on *ranges* may explain the rise in a community's fear of *stranger danger*, even though the risk of harm is in reality very low (CAPT, 2006). What is more we know that local young people are extremely concerned with all of these issues and in particular: speeding cars, insufficient parking spaces, traffic jams across the area, insufficient crossing places, car theft, car burning and the poor bus services (Hodge Hill Youth Conference, 2005).

A similar project based around Greater Manchester called the Neighbourhood Road Safety Initiative (NRSI) has been similarly based in areas of multiple deprivation. In such areas we know that children from low income families can often find themselves cut off from an array of leisure and educational opportunities (ODPM, 2003). Thus providing young people with a stake in the design of schemes to facilitate their movement as pedestrians and cyclists could help reverse the drift to increasing separatism and isolation. Particularly given that the Children Act (1989) says that Local Authorities and courts should consider the wishes and feelings of young people when making decisions concerning welfare, surely this should apply to considerations of young people's own safety more than anything else.

Involving youth in governance can also be an important way to ensure that their needs are being met by the community and also an opportunity for positive development for the young people involved (Hipskind, and Poremski, 2005). Erickson and Schultz (1992:481) have suggested that *developing voice* is an important way of helping young people form a critical awareness of their own ends, means and capacities. It will also ensure the acquisition of more valid data; which will increase a young participant's sense of citizenship and enhance their sense of personal development (Kirby, 1999). This has frequently been seen to be the case in local *youth led* projects in areas of multiple deprivation (Bentley and Gurumurthy, 1999).

In some ways we are catching up with developments that are far more advanced in Europe where priorities for young people including the promotion of citizenship education, the participation by young people and the promotion of access for young people to decision making is becoming central to European policy priorities (Kirby et al 2003). There are also more radical interventions that tend to put children at the centre of developing communities instead simply a consulted add-on. In Italy the Child Friendly Cities (CFC) initiative puts children at the forefront of the planning process. And the CFC movement has developed a new vision of childhood, which recognises the child as an active subject. CFC seeks to promote a new culture of the city, which encourages all citizens to participate in processes aimed to make the physical and social environment more sustainable and equitable. This has meant that adults have had to start changing their views of childhood and appreciate the possibilities open to young people when they become engaged in decision making processes (Baraldi, 2005).

In this sense then the YPSAP sought to develop opportunities for young people to be involved in decision making opportunities provided by the SAOS.

Activity Days

More hazardous wires taken right outside the school gates

Aim

The original aims of the *Young People's Safer Accessibility Project* was to:

- To develop methods of working with groups of young people to enhance the participation of children and young people in the ICSDP (now SAOS).
- To document the process of working with young people and the interventions identified in this process.
- To facilitate the process of road safety officers working with children and young people.
- To develop guidelines for road safety officers building on our local evidence base and our existing knowledge of methods of working with young people

Working with young people

It is now broadly accepted that contacting and engaging young people in community based activities is difficult (Jones, 2005). Arguably it is challenging. Like adults young people have their own views and opinions that are broad and embracing. However in addition to the challenges raised by young people themselves professionals frequently need to address adult perceptions of young people. An early social attitude survey for the SAOS project tapped into the different perceptions that adults have of young people across the area and revealed that young people were universally seen as problematic and frequently seen as the cause of problems throughout the SAOS project area (Social Research Associates, 2004).

Project Development

The SAOS project has various elements with changing identification tags in internal project reporting. However using the last representation the project was divided into several schemes*:

- ETP Project – Changing Road Safety Attitudes & Behaviour in East Birmingham
- Scheme 2 – Alum Rock Road
- Scheme 3 – Coventry Road

- Scheme 4 – Green Lane area
- Scheme 5 – Ward End area
- Special Project – Safer Accessibility for Young People
- “Early Win” Scheme – Traffic Calming in Bennetts, Membury and Chartist Roads

*Based on Birmingham City Council
Forward special Sept. 2005

The YPSAP was designed to adopt a child right’s based approach to get local young people involved in decision making around Schemes 2 to 5.

The YPSAP had several dimensions. It included a mapping exercise of local youth provision reported on elsewhere (Kimberlee, 2006). However, primarily it aimed to involve young people in decision making processes. Ideally this project would have liked to work with all the primary schools across the SAOS area. However resources and time would not permit the adoption of a universal approach. Instead we decided to work with one primary school in each of the project areas that were close too or on the roads earmarked in the scheme for intervention. We additionally wrote to all the schools in the area asked them to submit details of parking and road safety issues which their staff and pupils encounter.

Table 1: Schools involved in the SAOS

Scheme Number*	Project Area	School
2	Alum Rock Road	St Saviour’s Church of England School
3	Coventry Road	Somerville Primary School
4	Green Lane	Marlborough Junior School
5	Ward End	Thornton Junior School

— Based on Birmingham City Council

Forward special Sept. 2005

Having been given a start time by the SAOS project manager or the ETP lead we invited the selected schools to engage with the project. Initial contact was made by building on previous hard work already fostered by the local School Travel Plan officer. Preliminary meetings were held with each head to seek permission for engagement and to formalise arrangements for the planned Activity Days which were our vehicle for preparing and involving young people in decision making. The schools were left to decide which pupils participated but we requested engagement with all Year 6 groups. This happened in most cases, but clearly the school were keen to dovetail the project into their National Curriculum and Citizenship requirements so we selected dates to suit their tight timetable demands.

Work with schools commenced in July 2005. We were urged to engage the schools as soon as possible to ensure ideas and data were available during the project's first planned consultation phase. The aim was to carry out our Activity Days and then encourage some young people to come forward to work with adult groups. Unfortunately failure to adequately develop adult groups led to the plan being halted. In January 2006 we were again given the go ahead to recommence work with the schools with the aim of trying to engage a selection of young people with the adult Steering Groups and Design Workshops planned for February 2006. Having highlighted to the project the unrealistic timescale that this would put on staff and the schools we therefore consulted heads again and found times suitable to their needs for engaging young people. Eventual timescales of the Activity Days are cited in the table below. The SAOS Project manager at the time confirmed with the Team that the plan design and workshops planned for stage 2 of the consultation would await young people's engagement on this extended delivery time.

Table 2: Activity Day timing and the numbers of young people involved

Scheme Number*	Project Area	School	Activity Days	Number of pupils
2	Alum Rock Road	St Saviour's Church of England School	July 2005	90
3	Coventry Road	Somerville Primary School	15-18 May 2006	92
4	Green Lane	Marlborough Junior School	25-28 th Sept 2006	94
5	Ward End	Thornton Junior School	6-10 June 2006	125
			Total	405

— Based on Birmingham City Council
Forward special Sept. 2005

The Team

The Team that went into the schools usually consisted of a base group of four people. Myself and one member of staff from Birmingham City Council and one appointee from Atkins attended every Activity Day. There was always a minimum of four adults working with young people on any day but sometimes we had as many as eight. The Team included five School Travel Plan Officers who have worked on Safe Routes to School programmes, which is a national program to increase active travel by children on the home-school journey. It also included a project officer with responsibility for community links, appointed by Atkins and Liz Towner, Professor of Child Health at the University of the West of England, Bristol. Teachers and teacher assistants at the school supported group activities and additional support staff from the

school (including dinner ladies) assisted with the chaperoning on the environmental audits. Additionally, two brave engineers joined the Team on decision days.

Method

Internationally there are a growing number of examples of regeneration initiatives involving young people in decision making on community based projects involving issues around transport. In Ontario, Canada ten schools have been involved in a transportation study project carried out in co-operation with parents and schools. The results were shared with local school councils, school boards, community organizations and municipal transportation planners contributing to the City's (2002) *Transportation Master Plan Update* (Wurtele and Ritchie, 2005). The NRSI project in the UK has also hosted of few examples of centre based projects where young people have made decisions around diversionary motorised activities.

In the SAOS project we sought to build on existing examples of good practice of learning and discussing road safety with young people and also aimed to add in participatory techniques developed by the Children's Rights Alliance for England (CRAE). Our own local knowledge and experience enabled us to adjust our techniques to suit local circumstances, thus the Activity Day we developed was literally that: a day of activities containing four elements:

- Road Safety Knowledge
- Environmental Audit
- Citizenship training
- Examination of engineering plans

The activities were designed so that we could work with one class throughout the normal school day. All classes contained 30 or more young people. During our initial sessions at St. Saviour's School we used some activities from the successful *Talkin' Loud* projects developed and run by Young TransNet. Young TransNet was a network hosted by the National Children's Bureau that provides information for children and young people about sustainable transport. It is a non-profit-making initiative that came into being in 1997 through a partnership formed from the Sainsbury's Family Charitable Trusts, the Road Danger Reduction Forum and the National Children's Bureau. Young TransNet's aim was to help reduce traffic and road congestion by fostering a modal shift away from the car. Their *Talkin' Loud* workshops were specifically designed to empower young people and children and to promote active citizenships to ensure that their views are incorporated into local government policy. Their talk shop methods were piloted in the first school during May 2005 and took approximately 75 minutes to complete. The talkshops were fun activities and helped young people to consider both transport and environmental issues. They also yielded an abundant amount of

qualitative data which other schools have used for school travel plans, consultation and research etc.

The activities organized for the Talkshops were:

- In small groups identifying *out of school journeys* and mode of transport used in the last week.
- Using large street maps locate journeys to school. Mode of transport and length of time taken.
- Using visual stimuli young people were encouraged to discuss visiting local venues and their sense of safety. The venues chosen included Ward End Park, the Bull Ring Shopping Centre, Star City, St Andrew's Football Stadium and the local Swimming Pool.

Each activity was followed by a Plenary session and at the end of the Talkshop young people were invited to participate in a further Activity Day based around the responses they provided at the Talkshop.

Our experience of this process helped us to build on their methods and for the three remaining schools we adopted the techniques and developed them as a pre-Activity Day exercise to be conducted in class prior to the Team's arrival for the Activity Day.

Road Safety Knowledge

To adults road safety is often seen as *boring, boring, boring* (Jones 2002:12) and young people are equally disinterested (Scottish Executive Central Research Unit 1998). In order to stimulate young people's knowledge and awareness of road safety during the Activity Day we had to work hard to stimulate their interest. We therefore utilized a new training technique based around interactive technology called Qwizdom. The technology presents a series of questions about road safety and the Highway Code and the young people are invited to respond to a range of multiple choice answers using interactive keypads. Feedback is instantaneous and it provides road safety officers and any other teacher with an opportunity to discuss aspects of road safety. The technique has been praised by LARSOA (2006) the national road safety organisation that represents Road Safety Officers and it is being increasingly utilised by local road safety officers including those in Cambridgeshire, Edinburgh and Peterborough.

Environmental Audit

Having learnt from the Talkshops and pre-Activity Day exercises the routes taken by young people to get to school we devised a route for young people

to traverse. The routes were risk assessed prior to the Activity Day. Dressed in luminous green, safety jackets and armed with clip boards and digital cameras the young people walked around a planned route in small groups with an adult guide for support. Young people were asked to note down their likes, dislikes, safety features and ideas for change. These were subsequently discussed on return to the classroom in small groups and eventually in a plenary session. The routes taken were literally the four roads that immediately surrounded the school plus any additional areas that were proposed as part of the project's scheme development.

Citizenship training

During the next session young people were invited to reflect on what actions (Action Projection) could be undertaken to improve their local environment and make their area safer. This was based on techniques developed by the Children's Rights Alliance for England from their *Ready, Steady, Go* participation packs. After considering the responses given from the environmental audit they were subsequently asked to consider ideas from the perspective of:

- Yourself
- Your Family
- The City Council
- Police
- Shopkeepers
- School Council

Their ideas were collected and discussed in small groups with the help of an adult. Each group was asked to select their best idea to present to the rest of the class. Group members gave brief presentations on their ideas and then the whole class voted on the class' best. This was done by publicly registering an endorsement on each group's sheet which practically raised issues of problems associated with voting. Young people were able to see that some groups were cheating, others voted tactically, some failed to vote with the suggested cross, while others reported dilemmas around indecision. This exercise was undertaken to get young people used the idea of voting which they were going invited to do on the intended designs developed by the engineers.

Examination of engineering plans

To complete the day young people were then shown copies of the plans as they affected roads/pavements outside their school. Question and Answer sheets were devised to assist in the exploration of the features and changes intended in the design. Prior to examining the plans they were shown a 3-D graphic presentation of what the options would look like. This really brought

the scheme to life and stimulated much debate and discussion around the proposals. At the conclusion of the day young people were asked to reflect on these proposals and to devise any questions they may have regarding what they had seen.

Meeting the service providers and participation in decision-making

Once all the classes in the school had participated in the Activity Day we returned back to the school (usually at the end of the week after the Activity Days had been completed) and every class had an opportunity to ask questions of the service providers: the Engineers! All questions were answered by the engineers and where an answer was not known or where the engineer had insufficient information they wrote back to the young people with a response. Unfortunately, their responses took some considerable time and arrived in most cases a good six months after the voting had taken place. However the engineers did well to provide written answers to over 147 questions not dealt with at the question and answer session. Pressures of design and plan production meant young people's concerns were given a low priority. Once the question and answer sessions were complete they then had an opportunity to vote on the options identified by the engineers for the road/s immediately outside their school. Young people voted individually, confidentially entering a cross on a ballot paper as learnt in the citizenship training session and posting it into an official BCC ballot box.

At the end of the voting they were thanked for their support and efforts and were rewarded with an unanticipated Tote Bag bearing the project's slogan which contained Spike the Road Safety hedgehog and road safety information and leaflets including: *Working for a safer area* from the Sandwell Road Safety Team, *Get across the road safely* from the Department for Transport and *Young People's Highway Code* with stickers. The children weren't aware of these gifts at the start of the day. Evaluation sheets were also handed out at the end of the voting process and teachers were also asked to evaluate the impact of the activities by responding to a confidential questionnaire four weeks later.

Ethics

Programme managers and researchers who work and gather information in order to develop and evaluate appropriate responses to the needs of children and adolescents must maintain high ethical standards in order to protect and respect them (Schenk and Williamson, 2005). Thus, like all community based projects that engage young people we had to seek young people's and their parent's permission to participate in the project. Opt-in letters were sent to parents in the fortnight before the Activity Days. The letter outlined the proposed events and sought additional permission for photographic work. Throughout the activity days no parents withdrew their child but two parents objected to participation in photographic work.

The Data (what young people said)



The rubbish had not been collected that week (again!)

A key part of the Activity Day was undertaking an Environmental Audit. This gave young people an opportunity to explore their local environment and identify the things that they liked or disliked about the four roads that immediately surrounded their school.

It is clear there were a lot of things that the young people could identify as being liked. They clearly liked seeing clean and tidy things in their local environment, with shops and places of worship being identified as being important features of their local environment but they also valued and liked things that kept them secure. Hence, the positive references to security features like the police, engineering safety features and CCTV cameras. The Team and all helpers on the day encouraged the young people to look around as they walked. It is interesting to note that the majority of children gave positive endorsement of cars and motorised vehicles generally (e.g. motorbikes) but no child gave any expression of interest or like of public transport. This is despite the fact that buses passed directly by all the four schools. It is clear that the poor service offered by Birmingham bus services that have been condemned by local MPs and people alike (Walker, 2006) are equally rejected by young people. Like the readers of the *Birmingham Mail* some of them are likely to have witnessed smoking, drug taking and violence (Hurst, 2007). Here are some of their comments from the *dislike* section on their evaluation sheets:

Buses not going by the kerb and creating more traffic jams

Bus stopping in the middle of the road

I live in Bordesley Green. The busses are unreliable and the smell weird!

During the activity days the young people were also asked to tell us what they didn't like about their local area. We again list their views below which were collected and collated in plenary sessions after the Environmental Audit. All these issues were fairly common in each of the four areas:

Pavement
Chewing gum
Rubbish
'The rubbish man doesn't come'
Shop keepers leaving things outside
Paint and chalk on the floor
Litter
Dog mess
Rotting vegetables
Fast Food debris

Environment

Smell
Smelly gardens
Broken glass
Graffiti
Trees need to be cut back
Old derelict houses in poor repair
Empty houses
Dirty gardens
Food on the floor
Fences
Rotten food
Smelly fire
Stickers on the windows
Smelly bins
Cigarettes and smoking
Mouse
Abandoned house
Full bins
Dirty windows
Strangers
Open spaces
Rubbish
Dirty mud
Buses
Blocked drains
Cats
Overgrown bushes
Dreary houses
Mice
Rats
Weeds
Stumps
Broken man hole covers

Roads

Spit on roads
Smelly cars
Noisy fast cars
Fast cars on Alum Rock Road
Speed limits
Restricted parking due to big boxes
The smell of the road
Cat mess on the road
Illegal parking
Dirty buses
Road works everywhere
Poor signs

Oil
Double yellow lines
Busy cars
Fumes from cars and buses
Police cars

We again witness young people's ambivalent attitudes towards cars. Some young people complained about noisy cars while others complained about the local restrictions (e.g. speed limits, yellow lines) placed on car movements. However young people also talked extensively about new cars and limos. A few had travelled in a Limo and many had seen limos on local roads. The other issue to come out of the Activity Days which were common at every school was the traffic problem caused by parents parking to drop off and collect children at the start and end of the day. Parents ignore keep clear signs, park on pavements, block traffic flow and generally create difficulties and hazards for young people and other road users. Finally, everywhere young people looked in the four areas they saw years of neglect and a lack of attention to maintenance by BCC. Signage is often damaged, facing the wrong way, difficult to read because of graffiti or exposure to the elements and street furniture like guardrails and bollards both broken and dangerous.

Other additional key themes to emerge from their experiences and plenary discussions in the different areas:

Scheme 2: Alum Rock Road

- Young people complained about the extraordinarily small pavements on the Alum Rock Road itself. During our Environmental Audit we were forced to walk on these pavements and it was difficult to permit the children to walk in twos if there were other pedestrians on the pavements.
- Many children appeared to have a lack of recognition of the dangers caused by shop keepers placing sundry items on the pavements in front of their shops. Their product boxes and signs frequently forced pedestrians to walk in the road.
- Generally, most children failed to perceive cars as a problem or a danger. In fact cars were positively valued being seen as beneficial and/or a status symbol and/or an asset. For example one group were asked what they liked about George Arthur Road (where some of them lived) the group said they liked '*the cars*'. The image of cars was very important.
- Buses tended to be perceived negatively. They tended to be perceived as the cause of most pollution and responsible for blocking the main exits and routes into the Alum Rock Road preventing their family cars from progressing.

- The children were unable to perceive public measures to promote safety as positive e.g. the one way system in roads around St Saviour's school were viewed as negative and a hindrance to car movement.
- The pupils expressed concern over driving behaviour demonstrated by adults including speeding, not wearing a seatbelt, talking on a mobile phone whilst driving and dangerous parking e.g. on double yellow lines, at junctions.
- Practically all children disliked litter and graffiti.
- Some of the children said they knew who had carried out particular pieces of graffiti – but not all were willing to speak about it. Some of the graffiti was gang related and children spoke about siblings being within gangs. Their enthusiasm for the graffiti sometimes reflected pride.
- We witnessed a lot of fly tipping, dumping and inappropriate waste behaviour. This included sofas, televisions, shopping trolleys, fast food wrappings, dog mess, cans, full bins, rotting vegetables, oil etc. All of these items were witnessed on a few roads around the school where they spent most of their time. It was interesting to see that a considerable number of the children were quite casual about the mess in their local environment.
- Young people witnessed generally appalling driver behaviour throughout our excursions: This included cars parking on double lines, cars failing to stop at junctions. Cars parking across pavements, speeding cars and adults having little regard or respect for pedestrians.
- Even though the Activity Days took place several weeks after elections there was still a lot of political posters left abandoned tied to local lamp posts and fences.
- Although many problems were highlighted by the young people there appeared to be a general acceptance and resignation about their local environment. In fact some young people did not see their neighbourhood as hosting any environmental or safety problems.

A note on road safety at St Saviour's

After our walks into the local centre and side streets during the activity days we had an opportunity to reflect on young people's road safety awareness. It was particularly interesting to note that the young people had a poor conceptualisation of speed both in terms of observing vehicles and in their numerical understanding of speed limits in their community. When asked to comment on the speed limit various answers were given ranging from 2mph through to 70mph. Very few young people actually knew that the local speed

limit was 30 mph. Quite worryingly they had difficulty identifying safe places to cross the road and needed very strict supervision when asked to cross even quiet side street roads. Young people also had little or no understanding or recognition of even basic signage e.g. no entry, no right turn, no cycling etc.

Scheme 3: Coventry Road

- The Sports Centre in Muntz Street hosts many coaches that often sit with their engines running for very long periods.
- The junction between Somerville Road and Charles Road has broken guardrailing from a previous accident.
- On Coventry Road the cycle railing is broken and bent making it impossible to secure bikes there. They also tend to play host to rubbish placed outside by shopkeepers.
- We found two small man hole covers missing
- Shopkeepers on the Coventry Road tend to leave what look like Propane and Oxygen cylinders on the pavement where they are susceptible to accident. The children though they should be kept in a secure place.
- In Somerville Road the rubbish had not been collected for over a week and was subsequently dumped into huge piles all along the street. Some had been attacked by (probably) domestic animals and their contents were all over the pavement and the street.
- In Coventry Road there were several battered and abandoned road signs just left on the pavement.
- Along Charles Road there were complicated road works with a plethora of signs that were difficult to navigate as a pedestrian. Some of the paving slabs were loose and missing and wire fencing bases constricted movement even more (please see p5).
- One of the road signs indicating speed limits was actually back to front and therefore indicating 20mph in a 30mph area and vice versa.

Scheme 4: Green Lane

As with the other areas problems of litter, car parking, graffiti are endemic. Again the pavements particularly on Green Lane are narrow and residents frequently park their cars and skips across the pavement making walking difficult.

- There is a real problem with cars hitting other cars in Burlington Road. Thus pinching and humps seems to have not addressed the problem. Prior to our Activity Day there were some claims that the road was used as a rat run by motorists. The children were not able to verify this. However we did witness speeding cars.
- The pinch points are not fit for purpose and are arguably dangerous because they are being used as parking bays by local residents.
- While we visited there were road works going on in front of the school. These were poorly monitored and unsupervised. Safety barriers surrounding a deep hole were either non existent or poor. A digger operative was allowed to operate his digger with minimal supervision while the arm of the digger swung across the already narrow pavement where we walked.
- Flower beds outside the school in Marlborough Road and Burlington Road are in a poor state of repair and even a health and safety hazard. Young people and even adults could easily endure a cut or fracture from tripping up over them.
- The guardrails around the school were dented from previous accidents.
- The bin for litter outside the school had been set alight and had melted.
- In Burlington Road wires were exposed from a telecommunications post right outside the school.
- Poor car parking in Green Lane meant we witnessed two buses getting stuck and holding up traffic. This is a regular occurrence.

Scheme 5: Ward End

In some ways the problems of litter, graffiti, dog mess and poor driving behaviour was less obvious in this scheme than others. However the area did have some problems.

- The shops on Alum Rock road present a real danger to pedestrians of any age. We witnessed many adults driving across the pavements to park directly in front of the shops. While we were there two adults came up to the young people and independently reported that they had been hit by motorists. One gentleman's wife had spent two months in hospital. We also had to dive out of the way of a fork lift driver carrying fruit and vegetables on the pavement.

- There are several broken lampposts in the roads around the school. Some lampposts have jubilee clips holding them together and another simply had its wiring exposed.
- The state and maintenance of bollards on the Alum Rock Road were extremely poor. Some were leaning at angles, others were raised and most were not preventing pedestrians coming on to the pavement.
- We found one pile of rubbish which some children said had been there before Christmas. We were auditing in June.
- There was one electrical control panel box loose and unstable in Thornton Road.
- Electioneering posters were still up around the streets.
- The recycling area in Alum Rock Road was a mess with boxes and debris strewn everywhere.
- The litter bin in St Agatha's Road was adrift from the base. It had been knocked over by one parent doing a three point turn at school collection time.
- In discussions with young people we discovered that Ward End Park is an area that young people do not necessarily feel safe. Although urban folk tales tend to exaggerate issues and myths can easily develop we had witnessed evidence to verify their claims. In particular young people reported that older young people frequently used the park to race mini moto-bikes.
- The school has also complained to BCC for several years about a local car dealer who parks his cars on faded double yellow on junctions near the school. Their complaints have been ignored, but we witnessed the difficulties that this can pose.

Citizenship Training

Ever since the introduction of Citizenship into the school curricula young people have been encouraged to develop an awareness of social responsibility. Given that discussions around community activity and involvement is now a regular feature in English schools the Child Rights based approach is designed to not only encourage young people to participate in local decision making, which is a crucial and vital goal, but it also encourages young people to develop an understanding of the actions they can adopt as citizens and their responsibilities. Hence the inclusion of an Action Projection exercise, which was introduced as a means of getting young people to assess: their own, their family's, their Council's, the police and shopkeeper's responsibilities.

When they were asked to consider the actions they could take themselves most of their thoughts focused on either altering existing behavioural inadequacies (e.g. speeding or littering) or adopting new behaviours in order to improve their local environment and road safety. This is quite understandable given the age of the young people involved with the project. However there were also some innovative suggestions which clearly represented a profound insight and reflection on the issues explored during the Activity Days. Below I highlight some of the examples that we have come across from the four participating schools:

What I can do?
Clean the broken glass
Put litter in the bin
Put food away
Cut the bushes
Sticky pads for mice and rats
No cars allowed
No smoking
Put up no dumping signs
Tell parents to park
Start a poster campaign
Use recycling glass means

Interestingly, young people did not identify or even consider ways in which they could improve their own behaviour when travelling around the local community. Road safety was not necessarily a major concern either.

In terms of their family there was perhaps a greater sense that more could be achieved by working with their families:

What can my family do?
Clean the road
Clean the graffiti
Put up signs
No sweets allowed
Recycle rubbish
Take things to the tip
Put the rubbish out when the rubbish man comes
If you have a dog or a cat you should put a glove and bag in your pocket
You should pick up broken glass when you see it
Mum and Dad can buy a car that does not use so much petrol
Mum and Dad can tell the Council about cracks in the pavement and graffiti
Turn the music down
Take the car to the scrap yard
Phone the council
Do more walking
Tell family to clean your road and garden

Look after your environment

The young people clearly appear to be more able to perceive that their families could do more than they could individually. And this could have proved to be an effective forum to include if the SAOS was serious about seeking to '*change hearts and minds*'. One school certainly took the opportunity to present safety messages to their parents using the children's work developed on this project.

What can the City Council?

Make people do nice things to make it better e.g. paint
Clean the roads
Get rid of the rubbish
Plant more trees
Stop the cars speeding
More bins
Take care of the birds
Don't feed the birds
Fix the broken houses
Cut the bushes
Build some more houses
Make the place more exciting
Make more car parks
The Council has to find the money
Empty the bins more often
Councillors to tell the council to make more improvements
Dustbin men to clean messy bins.
Council fix the road
Make our streets safer
Provide more cleaning machines
Paint over graffiti
Plant more trees

Clearly there was a greater expectation that the Council should and could be doing more things. What featured prominently in young people's discussions was the need for the Council to do the basic things right like: collect the rubbish and intervene where problems have evolved. During the Activity Days young people witnessed some very basic problems like full litter bins down their streets or uncollected rubbish bags. With poor service delivery it is perhaps unsurprising that a sense of cynicism about local services and the council generally has developed. However, young people also felt that the local shopkeepers should do more to help improve the local community. Young people's suggestions were more punitive.

What can shopkeepers do?

Help people keep the local area clean

Shopkeepers can use their money for their local area
Tell people to clean their local area
Throw litter in the bin
No smoking allowed in the shop
The shopkeeper clean the graffiti
The shopkeepers cannot eat in the shop
The food shop could put bins for empty packets
The shopkeeper can sweep up inside and outside
The shopkeeper needs clean bins
Put up signs, to tell people, to pick up the litter.
Clean up own rubbish
Keep to their space

All the four schools have a school council where issues and matters concerning the school are addressed. At St Saviour's School the council organised a whole and complete plebescite on options available under scheme 2. One young man at Marlborough School took all his class's ideas to the school council for debate including an idea that the school council should fine parents who illegally park outside the school and use the funds to support school events. Other suggestions included:

Organize a meeting in the library for the school council to meet city councillors
to help plan to meet people
Order litter picks
Paint the bins a nice colour to collect more rubbish
Tell everyone about the (SAOS) project
Make leaflets
Give letters out about telling parents to drive safely

Outcomes for young people



Parking on double yellow lines and pavement blocking is a particular problem in every area

What have young people gained from participation on the YPSAP? This is very difficult to gauge and quantify because we wanted the whole process of the Activity Days, meeting the Service providers and voting to be as dynamic as possible without it appearing like a traditional consultation. However, we did leave evaluation sheets with the young people and these were completed and returned to us confidentially. Additionally we sent questionnaires to the 13 teachers whose classes were involved in this process and members of the Team, including the engineers have been asked to reflect on the process and the outcomes. Thus the comments cited here are from these sources.

Outcomes for young people

- **They really did have fun!**

Above we have highlighted that traditional road safety education is sometimes seen as boring and difficult to relate too, thus the Team worked extraordinary hard to develop and deliver an Activity Day that would be fun. Having fun is sometimes one of the most effective ways of learning. Some teachers at the start of the process were a little sceptical about the process we described and whether their young people would enjoy the day, however all teachers agreed that their young people enjoyed the day and the young people's responses to the evaluation endorse this:

It was a wonderful day

It was a lovely thing to do with close people

Thank you for a lovely day

In fact it was not unusual for Team to receive thank you cards from the young people as a mark of their appreciation.

- **One of the key benefits for young people was *Improved Road Safety awareness***

Analysis of the evaluation sheets submitted by the young people reveal that learning about road safety was a key aim of the day and one, they took very seriously. In fact when asked to recall what they learnt most about the day they overwhelmingly said road safety or some aspect of road safety like learning the Highway Code or knowing about the 20mph speed limit.

We learnt the Green Cross Code is important and you should use it everyday.

I learnt that road safety is very important. I also know how to look after the environment. I can keep myself safe.

I will always wear a seatbelt. Pick up litter and cross the road safely.

I will tell my Dad not to drive fast and put his belt on.

This is endorsed by their teachers:

It really improved their road safety awareness and their thinking skills and individual self confidence. (Teacher B)

Thank you for your help and making the children more aware of road safety and the environment. (Teacher C)

- **Insight provided into children's perspectives of the built environment and their local community**

They had an enjoyable day. Used different technology and loved the activities. They also really enjoyed the responsibility of planning their area. Please come again it was very useful. (Teacher A)

In undertaking the Activity Days we managed to understand and see some important aspects of the local community which the Highways Department, Atkins and BCC would not necessarily have witnessed through employing traditional consultation techniques. There are too many examples to recall here but the young people pointed out the existence of a new mosque which we did not know existed because it looked like an ordinary family house. We have discovered a warehouse building which looks like a former factory which apparently gives host to around 20 young Somali children during the day even during normal school terms. We saw them playing in the car park. We witnessed tensions between our project participants and older, young people (particularly boys) and they were able to point out issues and problems which we would not ordinarily been aware of:

A telephone box outside one school used for drug dealing

The use of mini-moto bikes in Ward End Park and other green spaces

The causes and culprits of accidents to certain street furniture outside their schools

- **Improved road engineering designs for local communities**

The young people enthusiastically engaged with the plans developed by the engineers and presented by the team. The 3-d graphic format was particularly effective in engaging their attention and helping them to understand the suggestions presented in the plans. All the question and answer sessions went very well. Thus although each group was given 30 minutes to question the engineers at the end of the session hands remained raised seeking more answers to more questions which they had developed and discussed between the Activity Days and the meeting with the engineers.

At the time of writing it is difficult to say whether any of the suggestions made by young people have been incorporated into actual designs because final designs have yet to be agreed with the cabinet member for transport and regeneration. However here is a sample of some of the suggestions made by young people during our Activity Days and the meetings with the engineers:

The need for improved fencing to clearly separate the *Park and Stride* scheme from an area perceived to be used by older, young, people and drug dealers.

The need to plan for coach spacing outside one school because of the difficulty children have in accessing regular coach trips to places like the municipal swimming baths

All schools gave advice on signage particularly which languages to use.

Problems posed by squeeze points for peak time parking.

- **Improved self esteem for young people**

The *Every Child Matters* report and the *Youth Matters* agenda recognise that involving young people in community projects and regeneration schemes through participatory approaches is crucial to ensuring that not only will service providers develop effective policies for young people but it also ensures that they discover that young people have a stake in their communities. This is something that the third sector has been doing for considerable time. Groundwork involve young people in a range of activities which they see as crucial to building relationships with other members of their community. But importantly they identify that it increases young people's *confidence and self-esteem enabling them to be interested in the place where they live..... helping them to play a full and active role in society and to ensure they are active participants in the agenda for positive change* (Groundwork, 2007).

Measuring self esteem was not an intended aim of the project as we weren't conducting an intervention time series trial. Thus our understanding of self esteem is purely anecdotal although one teacher commented:

I believe they personally benefited from thinking someone was interested in their views. (Teacher F)

The Team witnessed pride in young people when they actively collected ideas on how to improve the environment. Two young people who were also school councillors were keen to take their class's ideas to the school council and during the Citizenship training session several young people were earnest in their belief when they wrote that they would personally:

Make my street a better place

Sweep and tidy up the litter

Tell shopkeepers to keep places safe.

Positive feelings about place and space is an important element of fostering an individual young person's sense of self esteem (Colquhon, 1997)

- **Enhancement of School Council role in addressing local, environmental and transport issues**

They (School Council) certainly became more aware and now take more notice of their area. (Teacher D)

The Activity Days included during the citizenship training session an opportunity to get young people to consider ways in which their School Council could respond to issues raised from the Environmental Audit. Two school councils we know have considered some of the ideas raised on the Activity Days including at one school getting school councillors to fine parents for parking on the *School Keep Clear* areas. St Saviour's school council also decided to mobilise all the young people across the scheme to vote on the two options proposed for the stretch of Alum Rock Road outside their school.

- **Engagement of young people as decision makers**

On the evaluation sheets young people were asked to recall what they contributed to the day and perhaps surprisingly the biggest thing that they remember was voting! This was referred to more often than the interactive aspects of the Activity day like the Quizdom game and taking photographs which were highly popular. Being a part of the SAOS project was an enjoyable thing and for those participating their classes had ample opportunities to discuss the plans prior to engaging with decision making.

- **Enhanced links between Birmingham City Council's Road Safety Department and local schools leading to the delivery of more road safety training in the future**

Following the roll out of the YPSAP across the four schools one of the schools that was previously remote from the Road Safety Department has subsequently invited the School Travel Plan officer to work with them to develop their first School Travel Plan.

- **Environmental audit information passed on to local governance structures**

In order to facilitate BCC's commitment to the UN Charter on the Rights of the Child we have sought to ensure that their views and opinions are known to local decision makers. Thus all councillors representing the four of the five wards in the SAOS project area were sent a summary of the project, details of the environmental audit and the pictures taken by the young people in the wards they represent. These details were also sent to the District Manager of the Hodge Hill district and a presentation about the project was made to the district's Children's and Young People's Strategic Partnership when the local MP was in attendance. The SAOS project manager was also sent all details of issues and problems raised by young people on the environmental audit as they completed their Activity Day.

- **Children's awareness of poor motoring skills heightened**

One of the things that the Team discovered during the Activity Days was that many young people are very aware of their parents and other adult's poor motoring skills. Citations of local accidents and incidents reveal an understanding and recognition of a variety of motoring problems including in particular poor parking behaviour and speeding. Indeed, during the Citizenship Training we listened to several suggestions about how they could tell adults how to behave better:

Parents can make sure they do not park on the pavement

Park car properly – not on pavement or across safe crossing places

When you have small children in the car, close windows
– make sure their hands are not out

Park sensibly

Slow down while driving

During our Environmental Audits we were also able to witness poor driving behaviour from adults this included parking on double yellow lines to access shops, coaches parked with their engines running outside a sport centre for over a hour, poor driving behaviour at junctions and the incident portrayed on the frontispiece of this report. This photograph is taken on the corner of a busy junction on the Coventry Road near one of our participating schools. A parked lorry is partially blocking the pavement at this junction which is making it difficult to cross for young people. While parked the driver and his mate eat their lunch impervious to the mounting traffic behind them and unconcerned about the carbon emissions from their running engines. All of these examples and others provided the Team with an opportunity to discuss driving behaviour and road safety.

- **Activity Day model developed for this project can be used as the basis of other activities by BCC School Travel Plan Officers and Road Safety Officers in non-project area schools in the future**

It has been a valuable development opportunity for all of us that took part and we enjoyed the experience. We have learnt a lot about the participation of young people and hope to use those skills we have gained on other projects such as the Safer Routes to School Initiative. (Team Member)

To engage young people in participatory strategies to enhance their own safety has been an important component of this project. Team members have learnt new techniques and the methods developed by the Children's Rights Alliance for England can be incorporated into future participatory opportunities around decision making.

- **The documentation of local children's universal experience of road accidents**

One of the most striking discoveries made by the Team was that in every classroom someone could recall a recent road accident either involving themselves or a family member. Young people talk about road accidents and driving behaviour a lot. It is difficult to assess the trauma or depth of emotional feeling that is generated by these incidents but young people's awareness of death and injury quite profound. At Thornton Road School on scheme 5 all the

children in the school were acutely aware of a recent death of a pedestrian and could recall the gruesome details of the event. Again their written comments on the evaluation sheets reveal interesting insights into feelings and thoughts:

There are so many accidents I want to be safer

I feel nervous because teenagers get killed

- **All activities linked into the school national curriculum requirements**

In the planning and development of the Activity Day we tried to make sure that the schools could use this as an opportunity to meet the requirements they have to deliver the National Curriculum. In fact preliminary negotiations with Heads and teachers ensured that the Activity Day could be scheduled at a time to suit the school's calendar. All the schools saw obvious links with the geography curriculum when we outlined the inclusion of the proposed environmental audit. It fitted with *place and the local community*. Some schools were also able to make links with citizenship when we identified that young people would be asked to get involved with decision-making:

It was good to see the children talking about something that was going to happen in their community. We don't spend enough time doing this. (Teacher E)

Without prompting from us we know that many teachers did further activities and work from the activities undertaken. In particular, on scheme 2 one school organised an assembly for parents to illustrate (through the medium of drama) the work they had undertaken and the road safety lessons learnt. Around 50 parents attended. In two other schools we know that the School Council's have been discussing some of the ideas generated in the Activity Days.



Conclusions

Buses get stuck because of poor car parking just outside their school

The activities developed and designed for the YPSAP to include young people in active learning about road safety and developing citizenship skills in preparation for engagement with decision making structures has been widely praised by the teachers from the all of the schools and the School Travel Plan Officers who were also engaged in the process. They were also widely enjoyed by the young people who participated. Contrary to a lot of road safety activity which leave young people often feeling disinterested, feedback sheets from both the participants and teachers suggest that everyone had fun, self esteem for young participants was enhanced and important lessons on road safety were learnt through the active witness of safety issues on environmental audits and through utilization of the innovative *Quizdom* technique. BCC sent several visitors to examine our techniques and the methods are now available for future use by anyone working within the Road Safety Department at BCC. I have also showcased these techniques at ROSPA's 2007 Congress and will present a paper on the YPSAP at the 19th IUHPE World Conference on Health Promotion and Health Education whose theme is: '*Health Promotion Comes of Age: Research, Policy & Practice for the 21st Century*', in Vancouver, Canada in June 2007. The Activity Days have also featured on project literature used for promotional purposes as part as SAOS' ETP strategy.

So what have been the key techniques that should be highlighted as representing good practice in the future? A key part of the Activity Day was undertaking an environmental audit which enabled young people to explore their local community and collect data on the community and road safety issues. Camera usage was particularly popular and all schools received copies of the work their young people had undertaken. This not only provided useful data for the project and BCC but it also provided an opportunity to engage young people with their environment which facilitated the school to not only meet its requirements under the National Curriculum but it also acted as a good teaching aid to allow the school to begin to address two of the five key objectives of the *Every Child Matters* agenda: *staying healthy* and *being safe*.

We also managed to explore young people's view of their environment and safety issues which revealed some very strong and consistent views that young people possess regarding their locale and the public services they experience. Contrary to the photographic evidence presented in this report young people would prefer to see their local area to be clean and tidy and they highly valued increased security measures like CCTV and police on local streets to address the community safety problems they feel their community's currently endure. Young people were also ambivalent towards cars. Many expressed delight about the presence of limousines in their community and many preferred to be driven to venues in their parent's cars. However some young people also express some dismay about cars particularly those that were perceived to be noisy and/or polluting. What was also very clear is that young people did not like buses and many believed it was a mode of transport that was only suitable for '*low lifes*'. Additionally, what we have discovered (that still remains largely unaddressed) was the extensive degree to which car

and pedestrian accidents impact on young people's awareness and memories. In every class visited by this project one or more young people could recall an accident that a family member or peer had been involved with and the problems that this had caused. One school in particular could recall the recent death of one young person who was older than themselves that has made some young people very wary of personal road usage.

On this project young people were also able to note and report on the numerous environmental problems and road safety issues faced by young people in the streets around their school and across their community. For example they have informed the project about the stockpiling of non-secured hazardous gas canisters on busy pavements; the exposure of live electrical wires on junction boxes and telecommunication poles; the broad practice of fly-tipping and dog mess and the ubiquitous problem of illegal parking etc. The young people still await a response from the project as to how or if these problems have/are going to be addressed. However what they have welcomed is where the engineers have directly responded (albeit delayed) to the issues they raised where their questions directly concerned engineering plans. The other salient and perhaps more pressing issues have yet to be addressed and feedback given as to what actions (if any) will be taken.

It is important to stress that in undertaking citizenship training this project was also designed to ensure that young people not only learnt about how to vocalise their ideas and understand their rights but the project was also able to teach young people about their responsibilities as a citizen. Thus during the citizenship training young people identified a range of actions that they and their families could action in order to improve their own safety and enhance their local environment. They also developed suggestions for their school council to adopt and made some recommendations for police, city council and shopkeepers to consider. These as well as a brief report on important environmental issues and photographic evidence have been disseminated to all BCC councillors in the SAOS project area and the Hodge Hill Children's and Young People's Strategic Partnership.

But, what was particularly important about this project was that: for the first time in their lives, 405 young people have been invited to engage in an important community project. In fact one of the inspiring outcomes of the Activity Days was that young people were pleased that BCC and the SAOS project was interested in what they had to say which has also led to the development of an enhanced role for School Councils to address local, environmental and transport issues and it has also empowered them to offer engineers ideas to be considered for incorporation in design.

But what impact has the project had on decision making?

the evidence from existing evaluations is that they [young people] are still having little impact on public decision making (Kirby and Bryson 2002, p5).

The UK government believes that when people are able to play an informed and constructive role in shaping the public policies and services which affect them, they not only add vitality to democracy but also assist public servants and consultants to deliver the regeneration that local communities need. In fact, the UK government argues that the outcome of people's participation is better for all concerned (Together We Can, 2006). In the introduction I highlighted that local authorities have a crucial role to play to ensure that they assist to develop a *culture of openness and accountability* in their democratic practices (DETR, 1999). They are also urged to facilitate the development of trust when people *debate on issues of relevance to local communities* (DETR, 1998). Trust is an important ingredient in democracy because without trust communities fail to develop in partnership with their local councils. In recent times participatory opportunities have been extended to include young people in democratic processes. In fact I have shown that the *Every Child Matters* (DfES 2003) green paper identified *being healthy* and *staying safe* were two of five key outcomes for professionals working with young people to achieve; and the *Youth Matters* (DfES, 2005) green paper urged councils and service providers to encourage young people to actively participate in *making a positive contribution* to their community and society. After all:

The active participation of young people in decisions and actions at local and regional levels is essential if we are to build more democratic, inclusive and prosperous societies. (Council of Europe 2003)

It was against this policy context that the YPSAP adopted a child's rights based approach and actively sought to include young people in decision making around the SAOS project. This should have been feasible in Birmingham because BCC has a very proud history of developing governance structures to promote citizen involvement stemming from their innovative LILA initiative of the early 1970s through to the city wide Neighbourhood Forums active today and the BCC's move towards increasing decentralisation. However attempts to include young people in decision making fora are still quite new to the city despite establishing a UK Youth Parliament affiliated parliament in 1997.

Why has engagement in decision making been so difficult? Permitting young people to be active decision makers is a difficult objective to achieve. Here I would like to discuss four clear barriers which we had to confront:

- Resistance from service providers
- Young people are not seen as major stakeholders
- Cynicism about consultation
- The language of participation

It is not universally expected that young people have the potential or the capacity to engage as decision makers. Adults and service providers have been shown to frequently hold traditional theorisations of childhood which see children as passive recipients of care; however more recently new theoretical models of childhood require and in fact demand that service providers should reflect on children's agency and potential. In this project we primarily promoted young people's agency in participatory processes of community regeneration. We avoided traditional consultation techniques where service providers simply require users to listen and we also attempted to avoid starting from adult priorities. This was because it is broadly recognised that in the realm of community development and regeneration adult agendas of young people *having a say* are usually fairly ineffective and tokenistic and should not be considered as participation (Borland 2001). In fact there is no sense amongst most service providers that participation by young people is either normal or commonplace (Matthews, 2001:36); and the greatest obstacle to participation are the attitudes and working practices of adults and their adherence to processes and practices that remain completely alienating for young people (Lyons 2004). That is why we on the YPSAP engaged young people in activities that enabled them to think about the issues and insisted on the SAOS project hearing their views and creating important opportunities to have their views heard and included. Particular praise in this regard was the work of the two engineers who patiently developed plans, maps and 3-D graphics to facilitate their engagement, however beyond the Team the degree to which young people's participation is accepted and even recognised at the time of writing still remains very unclear.

Experience has taught that participation of young people in the development of youth spatial provision as part of the planning process often stands in sharp conflict with the needs of property-holders and developers (Simpson 1997:914). This maybe because of adult discourses that perceives young people as tending to be *disordering* in clean, safe, adult-oriented commercial urban environments (Cloke and Jones, 2005). This it not clear but, what is important is recognising that young people are important stakeholders in all our communities and should be involved in decision making and encouraged to learn about the potential hope and limitations of their views as everyone else. Failure to do so runs the risk of privileging consumer activity and either displaces or disperses anything or anyone that might threaten this *orderly flow of commerce* (Flusty, 1994), including the young people who can and will enthusiastically engage with the community and world around them if permitted and encouraged.

Young people are not necessarily seen as major stakeholders when considering engineering plans to enhance safety. In fact people generally are frequently not seen as key stakeholders in consideration of engineering improvements. Organizations like *Living Streets* and the *Reclaim the Streets* movement believes that it is vital to rebuild the social life of the street as the most effective way to not only tame traffic and reduce the risk of injury, but to also allow communities the facility to reclaim their own spaces from which they have been consistently excluded by engineering philosophies that separated them from traffic (e.g. in the UK see Buchanan Report, 1963). With

communities frequently excluded it is not surprising that decision makers have little expectation that young people should similarly be excluded and yet they are major users of public space and should be given equal stakes and a '*right to a voice*' in community discourses on equivalent terms as adult car owners who use the road (Grayling et al 2000). But, young people are not seen as a key priority on participatory agendas and local councils and consultants often appear to privilege the needs of commercial stakeholders over the input of young people (Merrifield 1996). Thus, without continued and sustained engagement with young people the risk in the SAOS project area is that young people may increasingly feel that their public spaces are becoming too dangerous and they and their parents may contribute towards a demise in public, communal, activity leading to resultant increases in isolation and obesity, an issue that tends to affect poorer communities in Europe in particular (Cavill, et al 2006, p. v).

I have reported elsewhere that there is a high degree of cynicism in the area about consultation run or commissioned by BCC. In fact a few of the teachers who had been involved in regeneration activities before suggested at initial project meetings with the Team that they had become familiar to involving *their young people* in projects and consultations but were subsequently forgotten about post-consultation and were rarely given feedback. In fact one teacher cited an example of SAOS baseline work as an example. This cynicism is not unique to SAOS but often extends to all consultations which makes people understandably wary. What often happens is that feedback on engagement is often ignored or forgotten about or not even built in during the initial planning phase. Why do we need to build in feedback? Well, there are a growing number of commentators who express critical reflections on participation and suggest that without feedback participation can sometimes *mask a real concern for managerial effectiveness* (Cooke and Kothari, 2001: 14). To avoid the reinforcement of such cynicism clear feedback strategies demonstrating how young people's involvement was considered is a basic minimum.

Eschewing these barriers this project endeavoured to ensure that young people had a *right to a voice* in community discourses. As professionals committed to regenerating communities and developing strategies that are sustainable for future generations we realised that we needed to be involved in generating innovative strategies to engage and include young people in their local communities. In fact the Power Commission (2006) has argued that rather than expect everyone to participate equally in formal governance, we should try to make people's everyday civic engagement count by designing formal structures of governance in a way that taps into the informal spaces of community life that people routinely inhabit. The places with which people are already familiar – the school gate, their place of worship, or their local newsagent or post office etc. These places are seen as holding the key to engaging people in governance. These places and the organisations that occupy them act as an everyday bridge between ordinary people and more formal governance activities. This project accepted this as the only logical place to start and worked hard to foster and maintain young people's engagement within their locales:

People already congregate in school, church, at the bus stop ... We need to work harder to find them – don't assume if they don't turn up to meetings they're not interested, (Power Commission, 2006).

In working with schools and on the local streets we were bringing decision making to the community spaces that young people inhabit. This project has therefore sought to keep in line with contemporary participatory strategies that are being consistently advocated by the UK government.

This report argues that this project has always been about participation and not simply consultation; we have stressed that this has been a very difficult approach for a lot of people to understand and grasp. This is partly because participation is a multi-layered concept that may involve young people in active involvement in decision making at different levels, from the everyday to a specific event (Kirby, 2003). But it is also difficult to grasp because of the complexity caused by the barriers to involvement outlined above.

Given an absence of a clear feedback strategy to the community the Team felt it was important to ensure that as much feedback as was possible was given to the schools and continue to do so even though the Activity Days have ended. There were clear (but unsustained) attempts in the early days of the project to encourage young people to partner adults in the community in decision making on the SAOS project, but this principle has largely disappeared. Clearly it is a difficult thing for agencies to understand and for service providers to deliver. But, we believe that young people still enjoyed this process and that the Team worked extraordinary hard to deliver these participatory activities and could have provided volunteer young people to engage in any active decision making process intended to deliver *the bottom up* approach espoused in the initial bid.

Involving young people in city planning can yield large benefits. We are a long way from the *Child Friendly City* approach adopted in several districts in Italian cities. Here the activities that have been developed have included not only young people's participation in decision making but attention has also been given to allowing children and young people to routinely engage in local government procedures such as planning, regulatory processes, budgeting, data collection and capacity building. A recent review of their work has concluded that there has been significant innovation and commitment to making cities better places for young people where local governments ensure that strategies are developed to include child and youth participation (Bartlett, 2005).

This need to assess participation and evaluate involvement is very important if we are to learn lessons and plan for more effective inclusion of young people. To this end we need to assess young people's participation against recognised criteria. Across the UK there are several key groups that lobby in defence of young people and their right to participate, e.g. the Children's

Rights Alliance for England, who also provide standards against which their participation can be judged. Also the National Youth Agency (NYA) and the Local Government Association (LGA) have coordinated the development of the *Hear by Right* operating standards for local government to enable them to understand the extent to which their local young people are included in local democracy in line with the standards established by UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), to which the UK has subsequently subscribed (Wade et al. 2001).

So far what has happened on the SAOS project is that 405 young people from the SAOS project area have been asked to provide their own opinions about transport, road and community safety in their local area and they have voted on proposed options on plans developed exclusively by engineers. What will be the final outcome from their involvement is still not clear. However reflecting on the level of participation that has been achieved so far we can look at NYA/LGA *Hear by Right* national standard (which is now accepted as a national standard by the DfES) and say at best our experience suggests that BCC remains an *emergent* authority. As we await the outcome of adult decision making processes to see the extent to which young people's views are included in decision making we can only say that local young people's participation can thus far be best described as achieving the level of 'tokenistic' on the *Ladder of Participation* adopted in the NYA/LGA model (Hart, 1992, See Appendix 3). To a large extent this degree of involvement is typical of post war urban policy, where children's needs and expectations within their communities have largely tended to be ignored, thwarted or obscured in the past (Matthews, 2001). It would be a shame to continue the trend here when enthusiasm for involvement with this project has been so very apparent. However there is still potential to achieve Level 6 (*Adult initiated- shared decision*) if it creates space to include young people in decision making and feedback on their views.

What is now required is that the SAOS project needs to develop effective ways to ensure that young people's ideas are integrated into the decision making processes developed for this project and their ideas made transparent to the cabinet for consideration. The Team has continued to inform the schools and the young participants through school councils about progress that has been made but the sad reality is we have never been able to give any participant a clear timescale as to when the SAOS project team and BCC would be able to make a final decision on what will be built in the local community. Neither have we been able to clarify a full and complete feedback strategy of how or if their ideas have been included. What is also quite sad was that the SAOS project has never been able to fully clarify what level of participation they were anticipating thus forcing the Team into a situation that we not only had to deliver the YPSAP but also advocate on behalf of young people because of the shifting expectations about what and how young people should be included. This is despite persistent requests for clarification to be made starting with our initial work with one of the school's almost two years ago (Kimberlee, 2005:31)

Feedback mechanisms are extremely important because through them we can ensure that any participant can understand how their views and opinions can be included. It is a thing that has been emphasised at every *Progress Meeting*. Internally the YPSAP has fed back information on questions addressed to the engineers, the data collected and the results of each individual ballot. We have not been able to feedback responses from BCC about their environmental audit or how, when and if their views will be included. To reiterate what was said at the start of the project *bottom up needed to be supported by top down* (Jacobs Babbie, 2005).

It is vital to build learning and accountability into the participatory process by continuing to foster a collaboration based on dialogue, learning and mutual reciprocity between young people and adults if service user involvement is going to be meaningful (Percy-Smith, 2005). Failure to build on this slow progress or ignoring its contribution will mean potential participants maybe put off by the experience, or worse, may learn that they will always be excluded by the way that community participation arrangements work (Skidmore, 2006). This is not a criticism aimed solely at the SAOS project but also a general reflection on participatory programmes involving young people generally because it is broadly known that although outcomes of young people's engagement in policy formation remains largely unclear, experience suggests that implementation of children's ideas is dependant on the institutional arrangements of adults and the cultural and political climate of the locality (Horelli 1998). Were the adults ready and was there a sufficient cultural and political climate to sustain and engage with participatory practices?

Despite this analysis we would still like to stress the positive subsidiary benefits delivered by the YPSAP outlined in the previous chapter. Although the SAOS project has primarily focused on addressing the high level of child KSI in the area the YPSAP has revealed other important social issues that still need to be considered and addressed, it is broadly known that service professionals, working within silos frequently underestimate the importance of these social issues when regenerating an area and tend to be more focused on physical regeneration. However we know that young people like residents perceive social factors – crime and fear of crime, poor life chances, and the consequences of poverty – as the main social factors that affect their quality of life and not necessarily physical degeneration (Page, 2006). The reports from young people documented here suggest that this still remains a truism.

Recommendations



4

In all areas signage is poor...often because of poor maintenance

Recommendations

There are many recommendations that I could make to cover various aspect of highway maintenance, environmental safety, road safety delivery and participation on regeneration schemes. However in this report I would prefer to simply concentrate on a few concise suggestions that seek to improve not only the efficacy of the SAOS project, but also addresses some of the unanticipated issues that emerged from young people that we urge the local Highways Department and other agencies address.

- This report should be included in any presentation to the BCC cabinet member with responsibility for transport and regeneration.
- The issues highlighted through the environmental audits conducted by young people almost a year ago should have a response.
- The SAOS project should clearly specify how and when it is going to feedback to the young people and the schools the outcomes and consequences of their engagement in participatory processes.
- Feedback is important for maintaining accountability and legitimacy. Therefore something more than a newsletter needs to be considered to avoid reinforcing existing cynicism.
- Young people's participation in decision making needs to be encouraged. The Highways Department needs to consider how their planning processes can evolve to include young people in decision making processes.
- Participation is not consultation. The imaginative examples used here (and others) should be incorporated into policy making processes. Empowering young people to be effective decision makers means that in the long run they are more likely to learn about rights and responsibilities, understand more effectively the complexities involved in decision making and more readily identify with local plans for change. In the long run this will reduce exclusion and prevent an attitude of indifference to local governance from emerging.
- Young people's antipathy towards buses is broad. The Highways Department, the West Midlands Passenger Transport Authority, CENTRO and the bus companies need to urgently consider strategies that involve young people in rehabilitating the image of the bus and addressing young people's concern about personal safety.
- Road accidents and pedestrian injury are reported here to be a normal feature of young people's experience of living in the SAOS project area. The extent of trauma can only be guessed at but urgent research

is required: to assess young people's understanding of accidents and injury; understand the impact they have on young people's transport choice and safety behaviour; and explore effective methods for enabling schools to deal with death and injury that occur in their neighbourhood.

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Cycle racks on the Coventry Road



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Appendix 1: Abbreviations

BCC	Birmingham City Council
CAPT	Child Accident Prevention Trust
CFC	Child Friendly Cities
CRAE	Children's Rights Alliance for England
DfES	Department for Education and Science
DSP	District Strategic Partnership
ETP	Education, Training and Publicity
IUPHE	International Union for Health Promotion and Education
KSI	Killed Seriously Injured
LILA	Local Involvement, Local Action
NRSI	Neighbourhood Road Safety Initiative
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
SAOS	Streets Ahead on Safety
SEU	Social Exclusion Unit
UK	United Kingdom
YPSAP	Younger People's Safer Accessibility Project

Appendix 2: Evaluation Questionnaire



Ref: Z01

November 2006

Streets Ahead on Safety Project Activity Day

How did your class benefit from the activity day?

Do you think it improved your class' awareness of road safety?

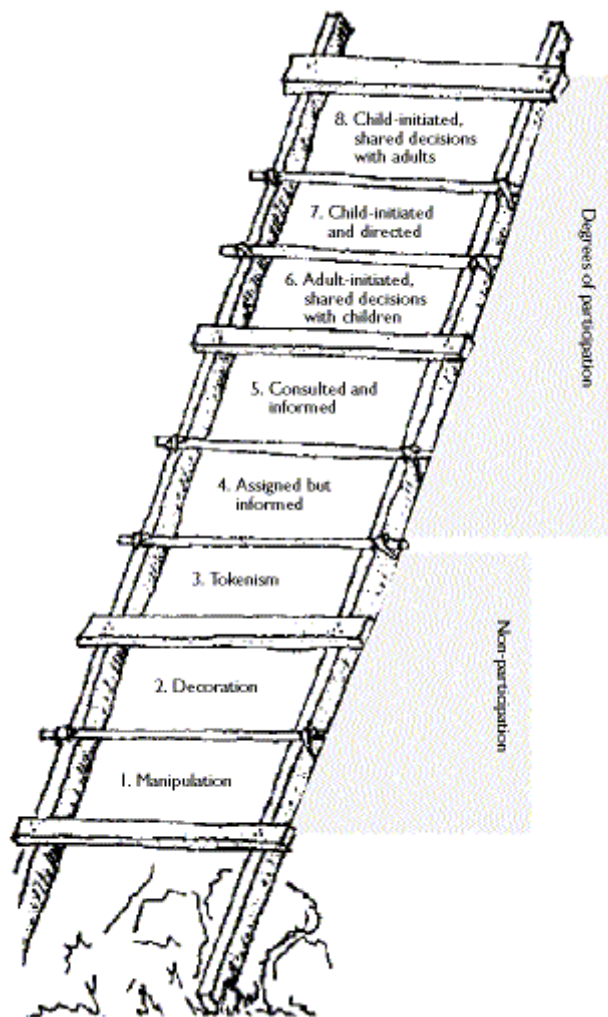
Have any of the ideas they developed been taken forward by the Schools Council?
Which ones?

Do you think it improved your class' awareness of environmental issues?

Was there anything more you think we should have done?

Do you have anymore comments?

Appendix 3: Hart's *Ladder of Participation*



Taken from: Hart, R. (1992) Ladder of Children's Participation, From Tokenism to Citizenship, Innocenti Essays No 4, Florence, UNICEF.

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