

Towards an Inclusive and Child Friendly London

A Children and Young People's Manifesto

for London Local Government

May 2006

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A Children and Young People's Manifesto for London Local Government

The children's and young people's charities in London have extensive experience of working with children, young people and families across the capital. Through this manifesto, we want to ensure that all children and young people are given high political priority in the 2006 local elections and over the next four years.

Some of the 'building blocks' to make London a truly inclusive, safe and child-friendly city have been laid since Quality Protects in 1998, with the emphasis on protecting vulnerable children and providing preventive services to children and families. Every Child Matters, Youth Matters and the Children Act 2004 have added new impetus to the changes we want to see for London's children, young people and families. But more can be done.

London's local councils are effectively the point at which national policy becomes reality for London's children, young people and families. Regional government has a role to play and significant progress was reflected in the GLA's publication of Making London Better for All Children and Young People (January, 2004). However we strongly welcome initiatives which link London boroughs together and are pleased to see the ALG aiming to enhance cross London services over the next 12 months, and the formation of sub-regional sports and physical activities partnerships.

We seek all candidates' commitment to the implementation of strategies that maximise the potential of London local authorities to bring clarity to a vision for London's children, young people and families in 2006-2010, and to work together with the children's and young people's voluntary and community sector to achieve this.

The lives of London's 1.73 million children and young people are greatly affected by Every Child Matters, Youth Matters and the 2004 Children Act. This legislation is re-shaping services for all children and young people – especially those experiencing high levels of inequality – at regional and local government levels and across statutory and voluntary sectors.

This manifesto focuses on how London local government can improve the lives of all London's children, young people and families by:

- Supporting vulnerable children and young people
- Reducing child poverty
- Protecting our children and young people
- Providing sport, play and recreation
- Providing child friendly environments and safe communities
- Supporting families
- Keeping children and young people healthy
- Educating our children and young people
- Increasing children and young people's involvement

A strong basis for this work is children's right to safety, to play, to be cared for and to be listened to*. We call for the active commitment of all candidates to implement these rights as set out in the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The priorities in this manifesto relate to:

- Areas in which the local councils have direct powers
- Areas where the local councils needs to work in partnership with other agencies
- Issues on which we call on the Council Executives (and Lead Members) to play key leadership roles

Together, the manifesto sets out a demanding programme for action to improve young Londoners' lives over the next four years (2006-2010).

It is vital that this challenge is taken up in all areas of London local government's work. Certainly local councils, working with others, must demonstrate to London's children, young people and their families that real progress is made.

To make London a truly inclusive, safe and child friendly city, London local government action must be based on the principles of:

- Prevention – of harm, adverse health and other poor outcomes for children and young people
- Provision – of the right level of support across agencies to promote their welfare and well-being
- Participation – of children and young people in policy and service development

**We acknowledge 'Action for a Child-Friendly London' as a source for this manifesto (Office of Children's Rights Commissioner for London and the London Children's Strategy Group, 2003).*

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To work Towards an Inclusive and Child Friendly London, we call on Council Leaders, Lead Members, all candidates and local councils to take the following actions

Help support vulnerable children and young people by:

Homeless children, young people and families

Recognising that the needs of homeless families in temporary accommodation for services may increase, at the same time as their access to and continuity in services may actually decrease. This can mean losing nursery or school places, as well as community and social support networks.

Runaways

Helping to develop, with the Association of London Government and London Child Protection Committee, a shared understanding and awareness of the issues for 'runaway' children in London – including the need for access to free and confidential telephone help lines and to safe refuges.

Living away from home

Supporting the provision of access to independent advocacy, advice and support for all children and young people who live in residential care or in a foster family. Improving the consistency and quality of care for all looked after children.

Excluded children and young people

Focusing on children and young people not in education, employment or training (including those excluded from school), who may be vulnerable, "excluded" by ASBOs, at risk, and lack opportunities for social inclusion.

Substance misuse

Ensuring that specialist support and therapeutic services are available to children and young people who misuse alcohol, drugs and other substances – as well as recognising the effects of parental substance misuse.

Refugee and asylum-seeking children and young people

Highlighting the positive contribution that refugee and asylum-seeking children and young people bring to London's schools and communities, and providing specialist support where necessary.

Discrimination

Taking a lead in combating discrimination against children and young people because of their age, or gender. Challenging prejudice towards black and minority ethnic, disabled, gay and lesbian, refugee and asylum seeking, and traveller and gypsy children and young people, including access to services.

Research and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluating the impact of the second 'State of London's Children Report' 2004 to identify urgent priorities for the most vulnerable children and young people. Measuring the impact of new national legislation and policies on London's children and young people on an annual basis.

Facts and figures
on children,
young people
and families living
in London...

- 11% of young people run away from home for at least one night before their sixteenth birthday. London has just one safe refuge for young runaways¹.
- London's care leavers are still less likely to leave care with qualifications than children in London as a whole. Often lacking an effective school placement, many leave care with no qualifications at all².

- Health concerns, such as childhood obesity, are often more evident in London than in the rest of England. The British Medical Journal promotes access to play facilities as a main solution to this problem³.
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups make up 41% of London's children population. The Sort It Out! Consultation with children and young people showed high concerns about racist abuse, bullying, and racist assumptions⁴.

Help prevent and eradicate child poverty in London by:

Working towards the raising of family incomes – through wages, London allowances, tax credits and benefits – to ensure that no child or young person in London has to live below the 'poverty line'.

Improving the health and well-being of children and young people by promoting London children, young people and families' access to universal and specialist services, as set out in the 'National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services' 2004.

Addressing the impact of food poverty on children and young people's diet and nutrition, including actively supporting the London Food Commission's work to increase children and young people's access to affordable, nutritious fresh food at home and in school.

Supporting the work of the London Health Commission and its 2005 update report focusing on the health of London's children and young people.

Promoting the inclusion of high-quality, affordable childcare facilities in new residential, business and other spatial developments.

Continuing to support the government's ten year childcare strategy and review, and making the case to meet the high costs of childcare in London – especially for low income or lone parents.

Building on the positive schemes such as free bus/tram travel and admissions to museums, further reducing financial barriers to children and young people's access to cultural and leisure activities and facilities.

Supporting the work of the London Child Poverty Commission, including a study on 'school holiday' poverty. Developing, with other agencies, strategies to provide free and accessible school holiday activities across London. Children and young people with disabilities are particularly vulnerable. Experiences of exclusion are higher in low income families during school holiday periods (especially summer), as the availability of support by schools and other agencies falls away, and free play centre provision has been converted into paid for childcare.

Facts and figures on children, young people and families living in London...

- Nearly half of all children and young people in Inner London live in households with incomes below the official poverty line, compared with a quarter of all children in Outer London. Nearly a third of London's children and young people live in over crowded households⁵.
- On average, London's childcare costs are 25% more expensive than those in the rest of the UK, yet this is not reflected in Government assistance through Working Tax Credits⁶.

- Income support is received in families for over a quarter of children aged 0 – 15 in Greater London, rising to 35% in Inner London. These figures are far higher than for those of the UK as a whole⁷.
- Across London there is a significant difference in children's use of and access to indoor and outdoor play and sport facilities⁸.

Help protect our children and young people by:

Initiating London research and action, through the work of the London Child Protection Committee, on the issues of child protection and disabled children, as raised by the 'Report of the National Working Group on Child Protection and Disability' (It doesn't happen to disabled children, 2003).

Promoting stronger links via the Metropolitan Police Authority, between child protection and sex offender work across London through Local Safeguarding Children Boards, reference groups and Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements. This should involve public awareness, work in schools, and what individuals and communities can do to protect their children from harm.

Local Safeguarding Children Boards and Children and Young People's Partnerships providing leadership for a strategic, pan-London approach to addressing the needs of children and young people who are vulnerable to sexual exploitation, including commercial sexual exploitation. This should also seek to address the trafficking of children and young people for sexual abuse or domestic servitude.

Supporting initiatives across London to ensure awareness of children's right to the same protection from assault as adults (see the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) – including promoting public education, support for positive parenting, and law reform to remove the defence of 'reasonable chastisement'.

Participating in Internet Safety public awareness campaigns in London to ensure young people understand the risks posed by unsuitable or offensive material – and by adults who seek to exploit children by making contact using the Internet and other new technologies.

Endorsing the Play Safety Forum position statement on managing risk in play (Children's Play Council, Health and Safety Executive et al, 2002).

Help build child friendly environments by:

Promoting challenging and safe play and development opportunities for children and young people in parks, open spaces and the public realm.

Ensuring that supplementary and best practice guidance to the London Plan requires local councils and developers to maximise the opportunities for green and open spaces to be incorporated within new housing developments and regeneration projects for children's and young people's play and leisure opportunities.

Consulting with and involving children and young people in the London Mayor's '100 Public Spaces Programme', as they represent one of the key user groups of the public realm.

Adopting the Mayor's guide to play strategies to address a wide range of the expressed recreational needs and aspirations of local children and young people.

Prioritising the safe and equal access to urban green spaces by children and young people through the London Parks and Green Spaces Forum and the Mayor's Children and Young People Strategy for London. Parks and open spaces need to be safe and perceived as such, by children and parents, to be used confidently and without fear.

Responding with practical measures to London and national research on disabled children and young people which shows how their enjoyment of and access to cultural facilities and open spaces is restricted through lack of physical access, difficulties with public transport and adult attitudes.

Facts and figures on children, young people and families living in London...

- UK data from UNICEF and NSPCC shows that, despite people's perceptions, far fewer children are killed by 'strangers' than through abuse or neglect by parents or family members⁹.
- The most recent analysis of children's calls to Childline shows that physical and sexual abuse was the main concern in as many as 19% of the total calls made over a year. The Sort It Out! Consultation also rated abuse highly as a pressing issue¹⁰.

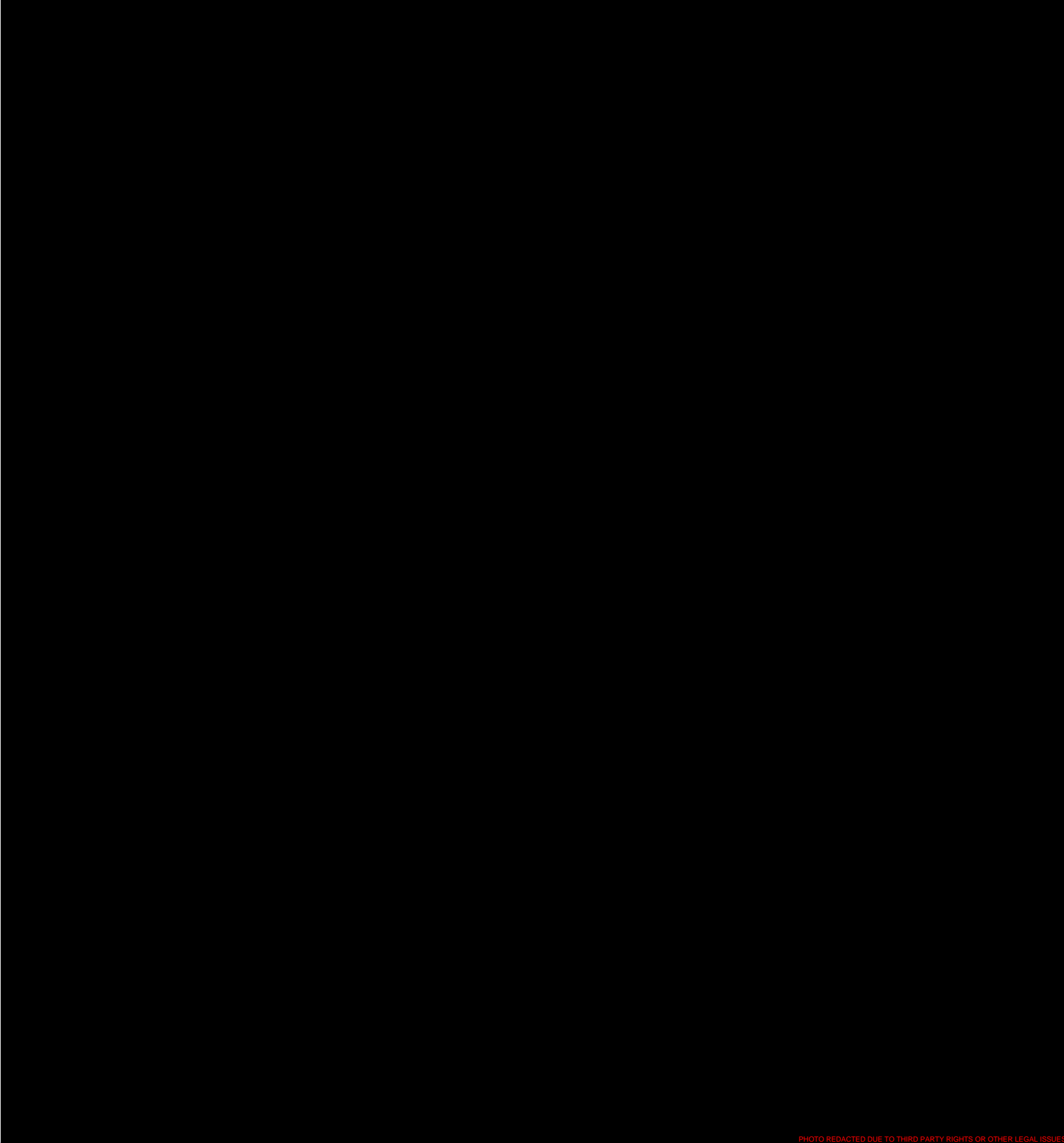


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- Evidence from a variety of sources suggests that open space environments for children to play in are often in competition with land earmarked for building development. This issue is particularly acute in Inner London¹¹.
- Children and young people's access to and enjoyment of public space environments is often compromised by concerns relating to traffic, personal safety, and public perceptions of 'youth'¹².

Help build child friendly communities by:

Involving children and young people in designing community solutions to provide safer, more child friendly environments.

Ensuring that the public services infrastructure (schools, health services and quality childcare, leisure and play opportunities) will be in place for families who are to live in the new housing expansion in East London and the Thames Gateway.

Promoting children and young people being viewed as citizens first, then as victims of crime and only as offenders where relevant – too often they are portrayed as perpetrators rather than as in many cases being victims of crime.

Ensuring that the criminal justice system focuses on improving child community safety as well as on youth offending – the Metropolitan Police Service should lead on collecting city-wide data on crimes against children to support targeted action.

Highlighting the lack of available youth facilities and activities, as well as other contributory causes of youth crime, such as poverty, low educational attainment and truancy.

Working with voluntary sector organisations to provide children's own play spaces such as adventure playgrounds which often top the list when children are asked what they want more of.

Help support families by:

Working with the Government, GLA and ALG to accelerate the re-housing of homeless families from bed and breakfast accommodation into permanent, suitable and affordable homes.

Making the case for and helping to deliver a range of accessible and appropriately supportive housing services for homeless young people in London.

Ensuring a continuing focus on the effects of domestic violence on children and young people through the valuable work of the London-wide Domestic Violence Forum and its strategy.

Working with business forums – through the London Development Agency – to highlight examples of 'best practice' in family-friendly employment policies in London – both by large companies and also the small business sector.

Highlighting the greater problems of child poverty for many families with disabled children and young people, through the impact of higher expenditure on items such as equipment and childcare.

Facts and figures on children, young people and families living in London...

- Young people are more likely to be the victims than the perpetrators of crime¹³.
- There is considerable disparity in terms of Borough based Youth Service funding. Consequently, there is also great variation between Boroughs in terms of the numbers of young people engaged by the Youth Service¹⁴.

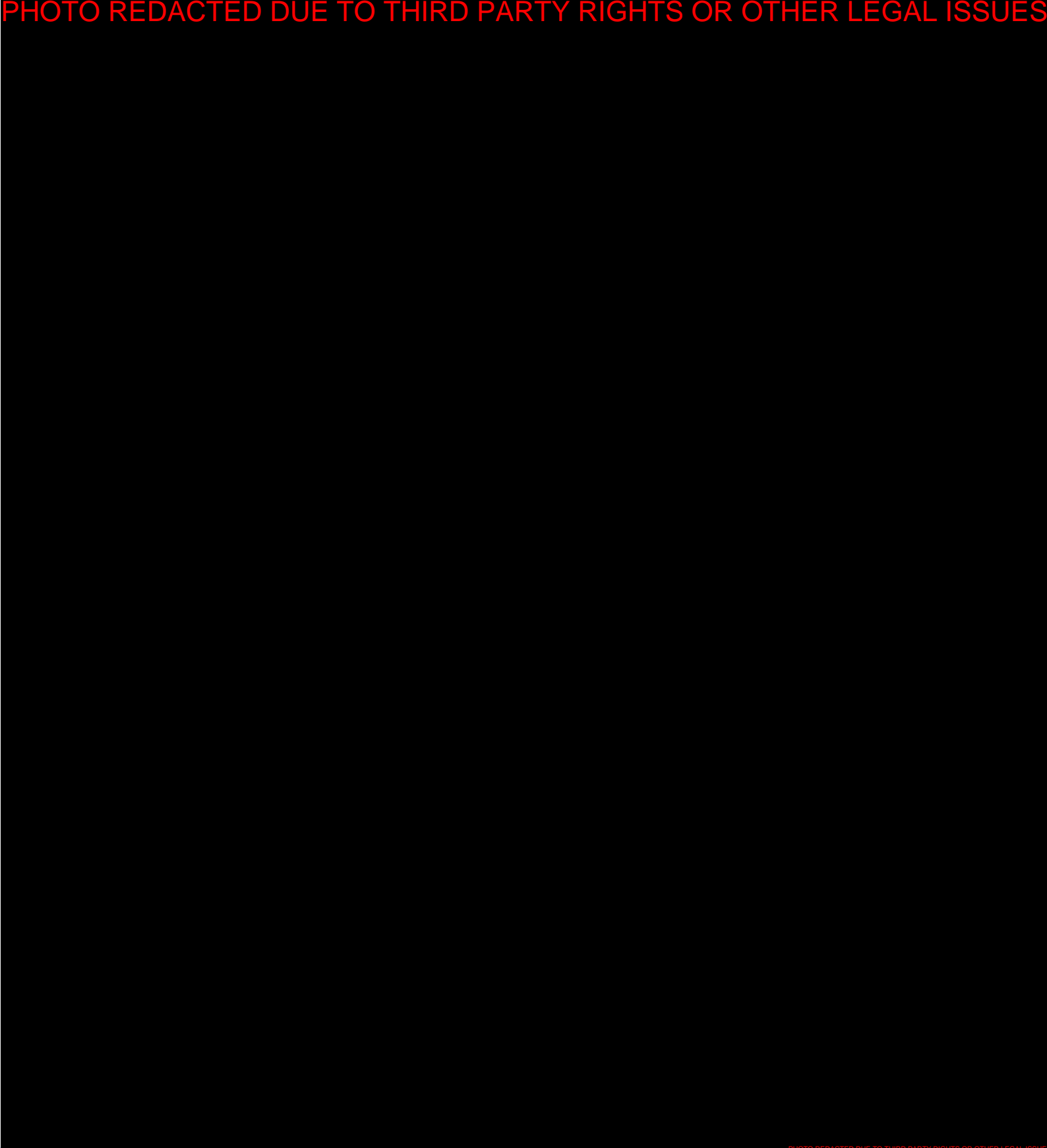


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- Homelessness is particularly acute in the capital. London has 62% of all England's households in temporary accommodation. Over 75% of the young people with whom Centrepoin works in London are from Black and Minority Ethnic communities¹⁵.
- 3% (over 50,000) of London's children are disabled¹⁶.

Help keep children and young people healthy by:

Supporting the provision of sufficient child and adolescent mental health services which meet the child and young person specific needs of young Londoners. This should be a priority for the London Health Commission.

Taking appropriate action at a Borough level to reduce the incidence of road accidents involving all children and young people, paying particular attention to the disproportionate vulnerability of children and young people from minority ethnic and poorer communities, as identified by national and Transport for London research.

Working with Transport for London and the GLA to highlight in the media and with the public the positive role of speed enforcement measures in reducing the levels of child / young person pedestrian deaths and serious injuries on the roads, particularly in residential areas.

Examining the links between London children's diet and nutrition and low levels of physical activity through a London Assembly Health Committee investigation and through the London Food Commission.

Promoting access to a range of out of area physical activities by extending the Mayor's free public transport scheme to children and young people.

Contributing to the work of the ALG / GLA sponsored London Child Poverty Commission in identify effective practices that minimise the impact of child poverty on health inequalities.

Help educate our children and young people by:

Supporting the case to Government for all London schools to have an independent counselling service, to help children and young people resolve any problems or difficulties they may have.

Promoting the key role and funding for youth services, voluntary sector projects and Connexions partnerships in London which assist young people – especially those who may have disengaged from formal education – in their personal, social, educational and vocational development.

Promoting a good balance between education and enjoyment, including freely chosen play, as part of the Extended Schools agenda, and working in partnership with local voluntary organisations to deliver this.

Working to improve the educational experiences and attainments of children in the looked after system.

Facts and figures on children, young people and families living in London...

- Approximately 10% of London's children aged between 5 – 15 are known to have experienced mental disorders¹⁷.
- Fatalities in road traffic accidents constitute a significant proportion of childhood deaths. A third of children killed or injured in road traffic accidents in London are on their way to or from school¹⁸.

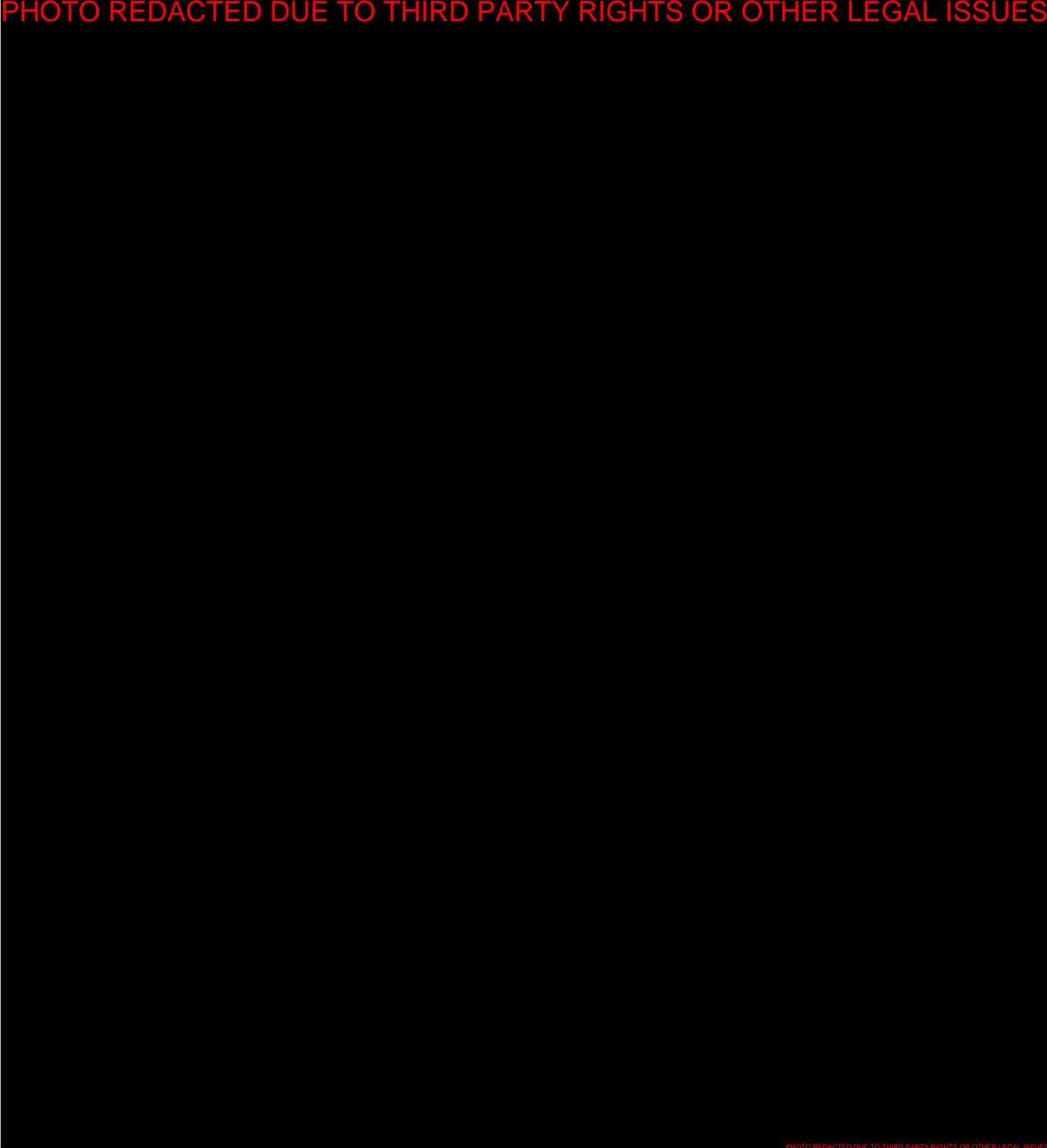


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- Bullying was the most common reason for children to contact Childline (22%)¹⁹.
- Rates of permanent and fixed term school exclusions are higher in London than elsewhere in England²⁰.

Help ensure young Londoners' voices are heard by:

Promoting young Londoners' equal access to the Internet and bridging the 'digital divide', so that the benefits and opportunities can be taken to involve all London's children and young people.

Endorsing and demonstrating the value of children and young people's routine participation and involvement in the management of their own environment and in making London an inclusive and child friendly city.

Continuing to survey and capture the views of young Londoners alongside work undertaken with adults in the Annual London Survey.

Involving children and young people, as appropriate to their age and experience, in the planning of the 2012 Olympic Games. They are key stakeholders through future participation in the Games and as beneficiaries of the legacy of facilities across London.

Facts and figures
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- Promoting young Londoners' equal access to the Internet and bridging the 'digital divide', so that the benefits and opportunities can be taken to involve London's children and young people.
- Endorsing and demonstrating the value of children and young people's routine participation and involvement in the management of their own environment and in making London an inclusive and child friendly city.

'Towards an Inclusive and Child-Friendly London' was written by the following agencies:

Barnardo's

LEaSE Regional Office, Scotch House
Tanners Lane
Barkingside, Ilford
Essex IG6 1QG
Tel: 0208 551 0011
Registered Charity No 216250

NCH

22 Lucerne Road
London N5 1TZ
Tel: 020 7704 7070
Registered Charity No 215301

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

Weston House
42 Curtain Road
London EC2A 3NH
Tel: 020 7825 2500
Registered Charity No 216401

The Children's Society

South Region, Edward Rudolf House
Margery Street
London WC1X 0JL
Tel: 020 7841 4400
Registered Charity No 221124

Save the Children UK

London Development Team
Cambridge House
Cambridge Grove
London W6 0LE
Tel: 020 8741 4054
Registered Charity No 213890

London Voluntary Sector Council

356 Holloway Road
London N7 6PA
Tel: 020 7700 8193
Registered Charity No 276886

London Play

89-93 Fonthill Road
London N4 3JH
Tel: 020 7272 2464
Registered Charity No 1104731

Coram Family

Coram Community Campus
4 Mecklenburgh Square
London WC1N 2QA
Tel: 020 7520 0300
Registered Charity No 312278



SOURCES

- 1 The Children's Society, *Still Running* (11) 2005.
- 2 DfES Statistical Volume, 2003/4, *State Of London's Children*, GLA, 2004.
- 3 *London Play*, BMJ, 2005.
- 4 *GLA Youth Policy In London 2006, Sort It Out!*
- 5 *Making London Better For All Children and Young People*, GLA 2004.
- 6 *London Metropolitan University, Children's Trusts Briefing*, 2006.
- 7 *Office of Children's Rights Commissioner for London*, 2001.
- 8 Based on Mori poll for Enfield's Citizens Panel, 2003.
- 9 *Office of Children's Rights Commissioner for London*, 2001.
- 10 *Childline*, 2006.
- 11 *The London Plan*, GLA 2004.
- 12 *State Of London's Children*, GLA 2004.
- 13 *Office of Children's Rights Commissioner for London*, 2001.
- 14 *State Of London's Children*, GLA 2004.
- 15 ODPM, *Centrepoint* 2005.
- 16 *Office of Children's Rights Commissioner for London*, 2001.
- 17 ONS Report "Mental Health of Children and Young People in Great Britain, 2004"
- 18 *State of London's Children Report*, GLA 2004.
- 19 *Childline*, 2006.
- 20 DfES *National Statistics*, 2005.

Other Organisations

that have signed up to the manifesto:

4Children

A National Voice

Brentwood Catholic Children's Society

Centrepoint

Child Poverty Action Group

Daycare Trust

Family Welfare Association

FSU – Investing In Families

Hackney Play Association

Haringey Play Association

Hillingdon Play Association

Islington Play Association

Lambeth Play Association

Mencap

NCVCCO

Partnership for Young London

Play Association Hammersmith and Fulham

Play Association Tower Hamlets

Positive Parenting & Children

Pyramid

Relate

RNID

Shaftesbury Homes and Arethusa

Soho Family Centre

Sutton Play Network

The Fostering Network

The Place2Be

The Refugee Council

Third Sector Alliance

Victim Support London

West Play Hounslow

Woodcraft Folk

Young Londoners' Network

Young Minds