

Paddington People

Winter 2010-11

10th anniversary edition

Let's keep going!



Dear Paddington People readers,

Since our summer issue, so much has changed – the new coalition Government has made major cuts in public spending, with added cuts in funding to the voluntary sector.

Here in Westminster, this has meant a devastating in-year cut to Paddington Development Trust's (PDT) funding for its work in our neighbourhoods, and no committed funding from the Westminster City Council beyond this year.

The coalition Government is telling communities that we must come together to create the 'Big Society' – meaning that local people should come together to find local solutions to their problems. In these terms, PDT has been at the forefront of building 'Big Society' in Paddington for many years.

Despite a 100% funding cut from the Council and imminent staff redundancies, our ethos at PDT is 'Let's keep going'.

PDT will continue to work tirelessly for the North Paddington community, but we cannot do this alone – we need your help. Please have a look through this final issue of Paddington People and visit our website at www.pdt.org.uk to support PDT in our work for our community.

This final issue also marks the magazine's 10th anniversary and as such, PDT has taken the opportunity to celebrate community achievements in which we are proud to have taken part.

In the future, PDT may be able to resurrect Paddington People through paid subscriptions or selling advertising space. Whether you are a local resident who regularly reads the magazine, or a local business that would like to advertise to your neighbours, please register your interest in the continuation of Paddington People by visiting our website.

And finally, thank you for your readership and your support of PDT and Paddington People.

Sincerely,

Neil Johnston
Chief Executive



Paddington Development Trust

(PDT) is a community-based regeneration company with socio-economic objectives and will be actively engaged in the economic, environmental and social regeneration of the North Westminster area over the next 15 years.

PDT has five core values:

mutuality

(sharing benefits with the community);

sustainability

(developing a green 'cooperative' economy);

empowerment

(participation of local people);

financial self-sufficiency

(acquiring an income generating asset base); and

equal opportunities

for all communities.

PDT is committed to equal opportunities and an equitable distribution of justice and power within local neighbourhoods.

Contact us at:

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65 Alfred Road, London W2 5EU
020 3214 3113
regeneration@pdt.org.uk
www.pdt.org.uk



Karen Buck
MP for Westminster North

“ What has been most impressive about the work of PDT and its partners is the way it has engaged communities and got residents involved in running projects and providing leadership in their neighbourhoods. ”



Mark Field
MP for Cities of London and Westminster

Big Society is already here

Since the formation of the new coalition Government, the term 'Big Society' often appears in the media, but what does this term mean?

The short answer is that Big Society is about people being more involved in their communities and 'growing their own' solutions to local problems. Although Big Society is being presented as a new concept in how communities should come together, the North Paddington area has the edge because we have been building Big Society here for many years.



Philip Wolmuth

In the face of public spending cuts, where public services and welfare will be hugely affected, residents are bracing themselves for change. Weathering this challenge rests on ensuring that the local knowledge, skills and relationships built up over the years are not lost.

In times of upheaval, it is important for people to understand where they've come from to see where they're going. This final issue of Paddington People celebrates the story of where we've come from, by recognising community action in Paddington over the past decade.

This narrative involves all members of the community and celebrates how local people have come together to rejuvenate the

Paddington area, which has seen a flowering of voluntary activity with local groups getting involved and taking action on local issues. This has been the biggest Paddington People story over the years.

Big Society can't happen unless people get together and get organised. In order for people to join forces to champion issues in an area as diverse as Paddington, they must have common ground. Paddington Development Trust's Neighbourhood Forums have been a vehicle for providing exactly this sort of shared space, and ultimately, for creating Big Society.

Hundreds of local people from different backgrounds and cultures have 'voted with their feet' to be involved with the Neighbourhood Forums, investing their time and energy.

They have found a friendly, supportive environment, and remained involved, encouraged by the progress they achieved through organised and targeted efforts. Through working together, residents have been able to agree priorities and develop a cohesive voice for local needs.

The success of the Forums is down to their wealth of local knowledge, experience and connections across the local community - schools, residents associations and the police, to name a few.

In short, Big Society is a new name for what people in Paddington have been doing for a long time. It means finding common ground to come together. It's what happens when people are connected rather than cut off and on their own. It means using local knowledge to come up with local solutions. It means people feeling that they want to be involved because their contribution is valued.

A lot of energy and commitment has been invested in this endeavour.



Philip Wolmuth

The challenge is to maintain the relationships and knowledge built up over the years in light of budget cuts and cuts in services, so Paddington people, let's keep going!

Minister for Civil Society, Nick Hurd:

“Paddington Development Trust is a great example of how a social enterprise can make a real difference to a community. The support, advice and services they provide are making a huge difference to people in their area. We have entered a new era of people power at the centre of the new Government and it's really exciting to see an organisation where this is already happening.”



Philip Wolmuth

Space for change

Philip Wolmuth



The last 10 years has seen a quantum leap in the quality of buildings and public space in Paddington's neighbourhoods, and the change is set to continue.

From the Beethoven Centre (*above*) in Queen's Park, past the London Print Studio on the Harrow Road, past the Stowe Centre, to Time Triangle in Church Street, things look very different today. Local people and community groups have been at the heart of these changes, with Paddington Development Trust (PDT) co-ordinating much of the local involvement.

Back in 1998, the Beethoven Centre was a disused college of further education. When the site was sold to Acton Housing Association (now A2 Dominion) for a housing development with planning permission for a community space, residents of Queen's Park were determined to ensure that the space was what the neighbourhood needed.

Resident volunteers, working together on PDT's URBAN Programme, rolled up their sleeves to conceive and plan a Community Centre to host some of the most important local voluntary and community groups.

12 years on, the ethos of those resident pioneers remains as the Centre continues to serve the local community. It is testament not only to A2 Dominion, who bought into the vision, but to the unpaid volunteers who fought for their Centre.

Heading onto Harrow Road, the landscape has changed dramatically. At 425 Harrow Road, London Print Studio provides an internationally renowned 25 metre window of visual and graphic artwork, viewable to passers-by. Shoppers on the Harrow Road often stop on their way home to check out the latest prints or reminisce about album covers from their youth.

The studio is the brainchild of local resident John Phillips who came to Paddington in the early 70s, fresh out of art college, and has been passionately committed to the development of this economically poor but culturally rich area ever since.

Next door to the Studio, at Ha'penny Bridge, is a brand new health centre open daily and providing a wide range of health services 12 hours a day, thanks in part to the work of local people. Resident volunteers of PDT's Queen's Park

Forum conducted a consultation that persuaded the Westminster Primary Care Trust to go ahead with the centre, and then provided the all important introduction with the owners of the new building.

Walking east into the shopping area, local people have again been involved in a number of changes which are beginning to transform their street. Firstly, the Westminster City Council responded to local opinion by removing the redundant 'safety' barriers which had blighted the street for many years and invested in much improved paving and street furniture. Meanwhile, the Harrow Road Neighbourhood Partnership, working with the Council, is running a shopfront improvement scheme to recreate high quality, traditional Victorian shop frontages to replace some of the low quality frontages on the street.



Harrow Road Neighbourhood Partnership

Finally, the once forlorn and sometimes intimidating Prince of Wales Junction (*above*) has been transformed into London's newest street market. The change has been spearheaded by local resident Julie Bundy, who has established a new social enterprise, Westminster Artisans, to run the three-day-a-week Maida Hill Market.

Continuing down the Harrow Road, one leaves the smells of fresh bread and home cooked Caribbean food of the market, and passes one of the

most successful examples of resident owned and led housing, Walterton and Elgin Community Homes (WECH).

Craning your neck towards Woodfield Road, you will see the pyramid roof of Paddington Arts, which has been providing performing arts youth programmes since 1987 and underwent a major redevelopment in 1998.

It is testament to the drive, passion and commitment of individual local residents to transform their neighbourhood, in this case Steve Shaw who took over a derelict ex-post sorting office in 1990 and transformed it into today's multi-use youth arts building which continues to provide excellent opportunities for young people.



Philip Wolmuth

Over the Canal, you are immediately struck by the Westminster Academy (*above*), which has helped put the 'Green' into Westbourne Green. It's hard to picture this stretch of the Harrow Road without its landmark school building in lemon and lime, though it only opened three years ago.

Just behind the school, underneath the A40 and alongside the Canal, architect Simon Kirkham's latest novel use of space has emerged. Great Western Studios provides low cost studio space for the creative industries. Within a stone's throw, the six Brindley and Warwick Estate tower blocks have been refurbished and the new Health @ the Stowe / Stowe Centre offers 21st century health facilities through one entrance, and youth activities and services through the other.

Outdoors, PDT's Westbourne Forum has worked with the Council and others to improve the park alongside the canal. Local residents spotted the potential

of this unused area of green space five years ago. The centrepiece remains unfulfilled but is still firmly on the agenda – to create a 'green campus' or environmental education area for use by local schools and the community.

At the end of the Harrow Road, you arrive at Church Street where residents have also been putting in the hard graft to upgrade their surroundings. 10 shops on Church Street have had facelifts, the dentists being a good example. It is now neighbour to a contemporary new library with a new entrance onto Church Street.

Across the road, the uninspiring concrete triangle has been transformed into what is known locally as 'Time Triangle'. The old concrete was replaced with smart Yorkstone, and granite time plates were incorporated in the stone to commemorate key dates in the history of the neighbourhood. Willow trees were planted to soften the environment and trace the neighbourhood's roots as an area of basket weaving.

Co-ordinated by PDT's Church Street Neighbourhood Management, local residents like Mr Taoulin designed a space which, as he said, 'means something to local people. Time Triangle is not just the usual sterile town centre development. We have created something which recognises the neighbourhood's history and is a new space which suits today's population.'

Whilst it is important to get centrepiece developments like Time Triangle correct, it is just as important to local people to sort out the 'nuts and bolts' of streets and pavements. In Church Street, over 50 local residents walked the streets for evenings on end, recording with a 'red dot' on a map all the problems with cracked pavements, yellow lines, lamp posts, dangerous crossings, etc. Over 250 red dots were recorded and residents continue to give their time to work with the Council to make sure the improvements are delivered.

Changes are set to continue with Masterplanning in Church Street and Westbourne wards, with residents hopefully at the heart of the changes.

A Greener Paddington

With winter fast approaching, Paddington residents are preparing their gardens to ensure a prosperous harvest for next year. Whether or not residents have their own gardens to care for, the opportunities for community gardening are plentiful.

Thanks to the Warwick Estate Residents Association and staff from local charity Groundwork, springtime at the Community Hall will be a sight, with a fine display of daffodils and lavender and soft fruit blooming later in the year. Similarly, the Brunel Estate Residents Association is engaging people in its greening projects. Local charity Vital Regeneration is also doing its part by engaging residents in its composting scheme.

Local students are also major contributors to community gardening. Westminster Academy teacher Charlotte Junker and staff at Groundwork have led students in transforming an overgrown plot of land on Alfred Road into a garden complete with shrubs, hedges and vegetables. Similarly, teachers at Paddington Academy and local resident Lizzie Dekker have helped students to create a beautiful fruit and vegetable garden on the school grounds.

But gardening isn't the only way that residents are showing their interest in 'being green'. In 2009, PDT's Queen's Park Forum organised a well attended 'Save Money, Save the Planet' event, offering loads of tips on recycling and waste reduction, as well as how to get involved locally in tackling climate change.

The environment has increasingly been on residents' minds, especially in light of the strong links between many residents and their native countries, some of which have been seriously affected by climate change in the last few years.

Going forwards, the Paddington community will only become further united in its efforts to be green.

Residents are getting jobs...



Westminster Works

Women from the Bengali and Arabic-speaking communities receive their certificates in Food Hygiene at Wilberforce Primary School in October.

The qualification will help the women get jobs working with children and in catering. One student said, 'I want to be a school dinner lady. This certificate will help me get that job.'

Head teacher Angela Piddock says, 'This certificate acknowledges the skills these women already have.'

The course and the exam were organised by Westminster Works Jobs Advisor Buki Franiku, who helps people find jobs and training in the Queen's Park area. Call 020 3214 3113 for details.

Something to smile about

Research and interviews by Westminster Works volunteer Harsha Parmar

Paddington resident Christine Burrows (right) has plenty to smile about. After three years of searching for work, she now has a new job. And the positive effects go beyond just a better income.

'When you are working, it gives you more self-confidence,' says Christine, 49. 'I am pleased that I am now contributing too. I pay tax. Although some of my rent is still being paid, it makes me feel pleased that I can pay my own bills.'

But Christine's pathway to her new job in Primark was not straightforward. She had previously worked in a chemists and felt this was still her best chance for getting another job. But asking about work in chemists' shops wasn't proving

successful. Finally Christine was referred to Westminster Works where she teamed up with Jobs Advisor Carl Jorgensen. Ten weeks later she had a full time job.

'What I wanted with Christine,' says Carl, 'was to show her that her own skills and experience really mattered.' He encouraged her to cast her net wider and see she had the potential to apply for many different kinds of jobs. 'I wanted her to develop confidence in the modern job market, by being on her side and believing in her potential as the best candidate for any employer.'

Step one was to find a work placement. Although these are not usually paid, they help people hone their skills and gather up-to-date

experience to impress a potential employer. So Carl helped Christine find a four-week placement in a large housing organisation, CityWest Homes, where she worked in reception and administration.

Then Carl mentioned an opportunity at Primark and organised an interview. Christine attended a screening interview, followed by a face-to-face interview. She was shortlisted, and after a three-day work trial organised by Westminster Works, Primark offered Christine a job. She started working full time in October.

Registering with Westminster Works was a turning point for Christine. 'There was a difference,' she says. 'What I did was to secretly give myself six months to get work to avoid disappointing myself and Carl. He has done a good job to help get me into work.'

But Christine should also credit her own determination. 'I treated it like a job to get a job. I went to the job centres. I used to apply at the library. I looked in the newspapers and sometimes looked in the Yellow Pages.'



Westminster Works

'When you finally get that job you do feel a sense of achievement. You feel you can actually do something. I know that I actually made that difference.'

Westminster Works, a local service with 11 well qualified, friendly Jobs Advisors, helps people find work and training. To date, it has helped over 300 people get jobs. If you would like to know more, or meet up with a Jobs Advisor, call 020 3214 3113.

...and creating jobs for themselves!

Have you ever thought of starting a business? That's enterprise.

The residents of Westminster are certainly enterprising. Under the PDT wing, the Westminster Neighbourhood Enterprise Centre (WNEC) has seen hundreds of people since they opened in February 2008.

Around 12% of those seen each year have gone on to start their own businesses. Research has shown that 80% of start-up businesses cease trading in the first two years. With the help of agencies such as the WNEC, they have turned this statistic on its head and 80% now survive.



Philip Wolmuth

The WNEC started as a community Resource Centre back in 2004. It has now become a successful Enterprise Centre helping over 200 people each year. Currently, the WNEC offer free business training (*above*) – such as an Introduction to Self-employment, Financial Forecasting, Market Research, Marketing & Promotion, Selling Skills and Tax Affairs – and one-to-one counselling sessions. They also have access to a small business loan pot.

The WNEC is funded partially through the Council, European Regional Development Fund and the Westminster Primary Care Trust. It is currently open Monday to Thursday. For further information on seminars and clients' successes visit their

website, blog and Twitter page at www.enterprisecentre.org.uk

As the economic situation bites and the Centre's reputation grows, the demand for its services grows year on year. In the last six months, WNEC is seeing nearly twice as many new clients as it did this time last year. Hundreds of local residents have attended seminar programmes and one-to-one advice meetings with experienced business advisors.

Many of those seen are unemployed and go on to start their own successful business. It is estimated that 50% of these new entrepreneurs come from black or ethnic minority backgrounds.

Self-employment gives people back control of their lives as they join the backbone of British business. Over 89% of UK businesses employ 10 or fewer people.

Local entrepreneurs have many enterprising ideas for their businesses, ranging from dog-trainers, fitness instructors, photographers, local handymen, market stallholders, multiple retailers, charities and even a cheerleading academy.

Some of these entrepreneurs are starting 'lifestyle' businesses; others are looking to be the next Lord Sugar. Whatever the business idea, they are treated in a respectful and professional manner at WNEC.

Help provided includes producing financial forecasts and business plans to ensure clients have a solid financial footing and the businesses are viable. WNEC also provides marketing help from strategy and budgeting, to help producing marketing materials.

So if you have an idea or want help with an existing business, contact WNEC. Just phone 020 7266 0636 or email kim@pdt.org.uk

The Centre is located at 59 Elgin Avenue, London W9 2DB (entrance in Chippenham Road).

Case Study:

Julia Neal is an experienced digital imaging specialist and a professional photographer. Following a career break, Julia decided to start her own business. She contacted the Westminster Neighbourhood Enterprise Centre (WNEC), following a friend's recommendation.

Julia was not sure what to expect. She attended training sessions and also one-to-one business counselling. This helped to build not only her business skills but more importantly her confidence in those skills.

The Centre helped Julia focus on core aspects of her business and differentiate her offerings into separate brands. They also advised regarding business entities and made referrals to appropriate professional support.

Julia quickly won a lucrative contract to project manage the rollout of digital imaging and product information software for one of the world's premier fashion brands, based in London.

Whilst working with the WNEC, Julia was able to practise her photographic skills. She produced an excellent portfolio of photographs that are being used by the Centre.

Here's what Julia says:

“ I never realised that there is a professional and friendly business support organisation virtually on my door step. They swiftly understood my business ideas and helped me clarify my business structure and I swiftly secured new business. I can't thank them enough. ”

Residents are taking charge of their health

Queen's Park Forum



Despite a large number of health services available to residents in the immediate area, there is a need for more awareness among residents about these valuable services.

This is being addressed by Paddington Development Trust's health outreach team (*above*), which started out as a small team of two, working to engage residents in Queen's Park and Church Street wards. The team has grown to five and now also covers Westbourne and Harrow Road wards.

Health outreach workers in Paddington have made it their mission to ensure that local residents have the best chance of living a healthier life, despite a statistically lower life expectancy for local residents than in other parts of London.

The team aims to reach the most isolated and vulnerable people in these neighbourhoods, considered to be those who never attend community events and who face language or other barriers in living the healthiest life possible. In a typical month, health outreach workers connect with an average of eight people a day. In the last three months, health outreach workers have connected residents to at least 20 different services.

But health outreach workers are not alone in this mission of improving residents' health; residents are very much at the centre of positive changes and are proactively taking charge of their health.

Health outreach workers enlist the help of over 50 resident volunteers, who participate in door knocking, help deliver health projects in the area, and lend their voices to consultation events that help shape health services in the local area.

These committed residents have been critical to the success of health steering groups, agreeing health priorities and working with service providers to find real solutions to health problems. Some residents who volunteered alongside PDT's health outreach team were offered jobs as a result of the training and experience they received while working with PDT.

Well London, a lottery funded health and wellbeing programme, recognised the team of volunteers in Queen's Park as one of the best of its kind in London; the team was one of the biggest and had among the highest levels of resident engagement.

One local resident who works as a health trainer said, 'Volunteering with

Well London and Queen's Park Forum gave me the skills to interact with people. I feel more confident now.'

Because of the close working relationships between PDT's health outreach team and local residents, service providers often approach PDT for help in rolling out new health projects and for helping to spread the word about these projects through their strong networks with local residents. In the last three months, at least 15 service providers have contacted PDT to request advice on how best to set up new services in our neighbourhoods.

If you would like to be connected to a health outreach worker in your neighbourhood to learn more about improving your family's health, or you would like to volunteer with the health outreach team, please contact Radhika on 020 8964 8024 or radhika@pdt.org.uk

So, what Health Activities are residents taking part in?

With input from the over 50s at Juniper House in **Queen's Park**, the Juniper House Scheme Manager and the health outreach team are developing a new programme of possible health and wellbeing activities, including film clubs, health and pampering afternoons, and Healthy Tuesdays, with Wii Fit and Health MOTs.

The **Westbourne** team took on the challenge of engaging women from minority groups in physical activity by providing culturally sensitive exercise classes. More than 200 women have taken part and 50 of them have accessed other services as well.

Church Street residents are taking advantage of free Health MOTs and are also taking part in the Church Street Healthy Cooking Challenge, where residents turn up to a series of 'cook and eat' sessions. Monthly prizes are awarded for the healthiest recipe.

Arts & Culture

For 10 years, the Church Street, Westbourne and Queen's Park Festivals have brought together the local community and showcased the best in local talent.

In the last six months alone, nearly 10,000 people attended these local festivals, which were organised by Paddington Development Trust's (PDT) Neighbourhood Forums.

These family-friendly events have grown steadily in popularity and are an eagerly anticipated part of the local cultural and community calendar. Key to the success of these events is planning them with local people.



Philip Wolmuth

The coming together of residents in large numbers demonstrates just how much local people value community spirit. As well as mass participation in popular cultural events, PDT has championed small and niche activities for or by local people, and attracted some big names to Paddington. From pop-up opera in community pubs to the English National Opera, from street theatre to Soho Theatre, from community choir to West End Productions, all of these and lots more besides have enriched the lives of many who live in, work in or visit Paddington.

As community and arts budgets are slashed across the country for short term savings, who is counting the long term costs? With your help, PDT will continue to organise residents' cultural contributions to bring about a happy and happening community life.

Paddington Festival

The Paddington Festival was organised by Paddington Development Trust in partnership with many arts, community and cultural organisations in and around Paddington.

The aim is to promote the many wonderful things happening in Paddington that make this a truly special place. With over 10,000 unique visits in its first year, the website www.paddingtonfestival.co.uk, which was designed by local volunteers, has been an outstanding success in promoting Paddington.

Highlights of the Paddington Festival included an exclusive scoop of the West End smash hit 'Into The Hoods' performed on stage in Queen's Park Gardens on 7 August. The Festival also brought together the three big Carnival Mas camps in Paddington – Yaa Asantewaa, Flamboyant and Paddington Arts – who together staged the first ever Carnival Preview event at Maida Hill Market.

Urban and contemporary street artists with participating galleries added weight to the offering of the Festival alongside cultural institutions like Soho Theatre, OperaUpClose and local celebrities and performers Bashy, Akala and multiple award-winning Ebony Steel Band. Sponsorship for the event came from local businesses Innocent Drinks and Coloursonic, and Westminster contractors Veolia.

The Festival received lots of press coverage, featuring on BBC online, The Voice, Grove Magazine and Westminster Reporter, and received live radio coverage on local urban radio station Bang FM.

Organiser Fabian Sharp said, 'It's amazing what we achieved on a shoestring. The best thing about the Paddington Festival is that lots of people discovered wonderful talent and entertainment on their doorstep for the first time. It makes you proud to be from Paddington.'

Through the lens

Written by photographer Philip Wolmuth

When the piano struck up and the cast of OperaUpClose launched into Act II of La Bohème in the bar of The Chippenham in North Paddington, it took most of those present completely by surprise.

Nevertheless, the 15 minute performance got a fantastic reception from a packed house.



Philip Wolmuth

Events such as this, part of the Paddington Festival, are likely to become a rarity following the funding cuts imposed by the coalition government on local community organisations. Despite all the talk of the 'Big Society' from David Cameron, funding for the Paddington Development Trust (PDT) and the organisations it supports, is being drastically cut back. The fact that grassroots projects are under threat suggests that the new government is rather more interested in the 'rolling back the state' element of its big idea than in the valuable work being done by the voluntary sector. Not a great surprise, but still disappointing.

I've been photographing community action in Paddington for more than 30 years, and since 1997, when PDT was set up, many of my pictures were taken for this magazine. It has been a privilege and a pleasure, allowing me to meet many wonderful people, and to experience and record in great detail the impact of community initiatives in this constantly evolving area of inner London. I don't intend to stop any time soon – whatever the new regime has in store.

Families at the heart of the community



Philip Wolmuth

Families must be at the centre of any Big Society, and that's certainly the case here in North Westminster.

Each neighbourhood in Westminster is designated a 'Children's Centre', that brings together local nurseries, schools, health centres, community centres, etc, to ensure that families with young children have their full support.

This model of working together was developed so that families with young children could receive support locally to ensure a good start in life for their children. A network of knowledgeable staff from a variety of community, public and private sector organisations work together in local teams, alongside parents, to solve problems on a local level and to help shape services and activities.

Anyone with a child under five years old has access to free parenting support and information at their local Children's Centre. All of the Centres offer childcare and early education, health services for children and their families, family support including help with parenting skills, and help to get back to work.

Although many of those who work within the Children's Centres network are paid staff, there are many parents who volunteer their time because it is important to them to take part in shaping what's on offer for their families.

“ Anyone with a child under five years old has access to free parenting support and information at their local Children's Centre. All of the Centres offer childcare and early education, health services for children and their families, family support including help with parenting skills, and help to get back to work. ”

Most Children's Centres have developed their own Parents Forum, where parents and Children's Centres staff meet on a regular basis to discuss issues. The agenda is agreed by the parents, and occasionally, guest speakers are invited to meetings at

the request of the forum members. The meetings are a place to share parenting stories, seek information and advice, give input on various subjects and also a place to relax and enjoy a cup of tea, all in a community setting, usually a school or nursery, with a crèche on hand.

Some of the Parents Forum members are invited to join local Delivery Groups, where service providers meet regularly to co-ordinate service delivery within neighbourhoods. It is critical to these groups to have parent representation, and these parents play an important role in determining how services will be delivered locally and how local budgets will be spent.



Philip Wolmuth

One service that benefits from parent volunteers is breastfeeding support. Interested mothers are given the opportunity to undergo training in order to become Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors, who can support other mothers who may have issues when breastfeeding. Breastfeeding mothers can drop in to various sessions to receive support from Midwives, Health Visitors or Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors, or they can phone the Breastfeeding Helpline on 07771 840 488 on weekdays from 9am to 5pm.

For more information, contact the Westminster Family Information Service on 020 7641 7929, email fis@westminster.gov.uk or visit www.westminster.gov.uk

The kids are alright

In culturally rich neighbourhoods like ours, one might think the differences between neighbours are greater than the similarities. Local youth providers are succeeding, however, in bringing diverse young people together through common interests.

Contrary to some people's perception, there is no shortage of youth activities in the Paddington area. From Queen's Park through to Church Street and beyond, the neighbourhoods are dotted with youth clubs and other venues, where young people can take part in a variety of activities.



Philip Wolmuth

The Avenues Youth Project in Queen's Park, for example, offers activities ranging from cooking, to music technology, to cheerleading. Youth club members also organise an annual fashion show, as well as broadcast live to the community from their onsite radio station (*above*), Avenues FM, for one month each year.

Moving down to Harrow Road, WECH Community Centre is buzzing with youth activities one evening each week. WECH Juniors can take part in cooking, games, arts and crafts, and more. On the same premises is the headquarters for the London Tigers, an organisation known primarily for engaging children and young people

in playing football, but who deliver a host of other activities for boys and girls of various ages.

Going east along the Harrow Road, just before Westbourne Green, one comes across the Stowe Centre. The Centre houses the Stowe Youth Club for 13-19 year-olds, as well as Youth Hub @ Stowe. Stowe Club members can take part in activities like sports, multi-media training and cooking, to name a few. They can relax or watch films in the 'Chill Out Zone'.

Throughout the day, young people can make appointments to visit staff at the Youth Hub @ Stowe for various types of support ranging from help with CVs and interviews, to sexual health advice.

Across the canal on the Amberley Estate is the Amberley Youth Club (*below*), where programmes are delivered for 10-14 year-olds and the 14 plus age groups. Activities include gym, boxing, chess, games consoles and more. On the nearby Brunel Estate is the Brunel Youth Project for 11 to 19 year-olds, offering a variety of activities.



Philip Wolmuth

Moving on to Church Street ward, young people can take part in activities like basketball, trampolining and a homework club at Fourth Feathers Youth Club. Similarly, Marylebone Bangladesh Society runs a successful youth club.

In short, our young people are in good hands with such a high calibre of youth provision on our doorstep.

Here's what Stowe Youth Club's Senior Youth Worker Michael Dipple says:

“ I have been a youth worker for over 20 years. During that time, I have seen lots of changes for the young people who live in North Paddington.

Having a new state of the art youth club has made a big difference; young people have the opportunity to take part in many more activities than before, which has contributed to their self-development.

[Stowe Youth Club] offers healthy cooking, music production, and three youth enterprise projects. We have a sexual health clinic, a successful boxing club, advice on training and job support.

I think it is essential we continue to invest in young people's futures. Having a facility where young people can get a high level of support is crucial and I hope in this difficult economic time, young people's services, such as youth projects, will be a priority. ”

Kids are getting healthy



Philip Wolmuth

Young people are getting a healthy start in life, thanks to numerous programmes and activities that teach them the importance of healthy eating and taking part in physical activities to promote good health.

Some of these programmes aim to engage the entire family in living a healthy lifestyle. The Active Families programme in Queen's Park (*above*) is a physical activities programme for the entire family. There is also the Kickstart Healthy Lifestyle Club, an afterschool programme for seven to 12 year-olds and their families, the focus of which is healthy eating and physical activity.

Westminster City Council supports youth sport and health through the Westminster Sports Unit, which promotes and delivers high quality sports and physical activity programmes for those who live, work and go to school in Westminster.

The Sports Unit puts on numerous community sports and physical activities on estates and pitches across the area. It runs the Neighbourhood Sports Program, as well as the Unity in the Community football tournaments at Paddington Recreation Ground, the Positive

Futures programme, and the Edutain programme (*below*) for eight to 13 year-olds, which runs during holidays and half terms.

Community groups also offer numerous sporting and health opportunities for young people. The London Tigers, for example, run programmes on healthy lifestyles, as well as football, badminton, basketball and cricket clubs, plus girls-only activities.

Young people can learn cheerleading at the Avenues Youth Club, train the Brazilian way with Samba Street Soccer, play yet more football with the Pro Touch Soccer Academy, or cycle, learn karate, or run with Kyu-Yo-Bu-Shin. Many of their runners are entered into the Mini London Marathon and the London Youth Games each year.

Sports clubs and centres can be found right across North Paddington, all of which have many programmes and facilities for young people. From the Moberly Sports & Education Centre and the Jubilee Sports Centre in Queen's Park, right across to The Hub over in Regent's Park, children and young people can find everything they need for a healthy and active lifestyle, from gyms and swimming pools to Parkour and trampolining.

Did you know?

Children and young people can sign-up for a Youth or Junior Passport for free swimming and discounts on other activities. Call Westminster Sports Unit on 020 7641 2012 for details.

The world's largest outdoor parkour area opens at Academy Sport early next year. The £170k project includes an 80m free flow area. Up to 100 people can use the facility at any time, with a maximum of 60 in the junior area and 40 in the more advanced area.

In 2010-11 the Neighbourhood Sports Programme aims to provide 140 hours per week of free activity in youth clubs and estates for young people to participate in various different sports. It is anticipated that there will be over 43,000 separate visits from young people.

For information on activities taking place in Westminster for children and young people, contact the Westminster Family Information Service on 020 7641 7929, email fis@westminster.gov.uk or visit www.westminster.gov.uk



Philip Wolmuth

Today's young people, tomorrow's workers

Courtesy of Westminster Academy



With cuts in public spending and the lack of available jobs hitting the area hard, North Paddington's further education centres continue to empower local young people to tackle these problems.

The sixth form at Westminster Academy (WA) offers a wide range of courses including the world-class International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme, preparing students for the world of work, with a business-like ethos.

In the last year, Paddington People has covered WA students running the equivalent of a marathon, joined by then Schools Secretary Ed Balls, to raise money for Children In Need (*above*), and raising funds for a micro finance project in Tanzania.

Over at Paddington Academy, the sixth form delivers a range of Level 1, 2 and 3 courses which reflect the aspirations and skills of learners and provide progression to further and higher education, training and employment.

Paddington Academy has also featured in these pages in the last year. We've covered how their students have been engaging with

the environmental debate, with one student even meeting Gordon Brown at 10 Downing Street, and earlier this year the Academy was visited by Dragons' Den's Peter Jones (*below*).

Courtesy of Paddington Academy



City of Westminster College has six separate centres across the area, offering a variety of education and training programmes to help residents with their careers or to access a higher level of education.

Young people can also get help and advice with education and career needs (and much more besides) at the Youth Hubs at the Stowe Centre (020 7266 8230) in Westbourne ward and at Cosway Street (020 7641 8587) in Church Street ward.

Young people express themselves

Here in North Paddington, young people are expressing themselves and learning new skills, thanks to local creative and cultural organisations, offering fantastic opportunities across the artistic spectrum.

Vital Regeneration delivers a number of award-winning creative projects around music, film and a range of digital technologies, developing young people's skills in literacy and numeracy.

DreamArts provides a dramatic outlet for North Paddington's budding thespians, running weekly workshops with top professionals and new urban musicals in the West End. Young people are involved at every level, from choreography and acting to writing, music production, costume design and stage management.

For years, Paddington Arts has operated a dedicated Performing Arts and Media Centre for young people, offering workshops in dance, drama, video, singing and design, plus a new digital newsroom, where young people can produce their own films and host TV-style debates, all in addition to their big Carnival programme every year.

Young people also get involved with Carnival in the summer through Yaa Asantewaa, who run a Carnival Group and Mas Camp, plus a homework club, street dance classes, and drama and singing groups, helping young people grow and develop into confident adults. Further Carnival opportunities come from Flamboyan Carnival Arts with their Carnival Mas Band.

Many of our local community organisations are facing cuts over the coming months and years, and our creative institutions are no different. They need the support of everyone in the community and local young people need their support and encouragement too.

What's our current situation?



Philip Wolmuth

The last 10 years in Paddington have given rise to community action on a scale not seen for half a century: regular cultural events, celebrations, interfaith dialogue, organised support for young people, and thousands of discreet actions by individuals or small groups all working for the betterment of this area and the people who live here.

This is something so special that community organisers from around the world have visited to find out what Paddington Development Trust (PDT), residents and partners are doing right.

The key to these successes has been the large numbers of local people who have chosen to give their time to this endeavour. Their involvement in planning and organising what happens on their doorstep has had committed support from PDT's Neighbourhood Forums and other local partners. The result is 'Big Society', a term introduced by the new coalition Government meaning that local people come together to solve local problems.

Last year alone, the Neighbourhood Forums created in the region of 350 volunteering roles in community activities for residents. Between them, these local residents gave 5000 hours of their time.

More than 10,000 North Paddington residents get involved with their Neighbourhood Forums every year. 20% of all households have joined PDT's Neighbourhood Forum mailing lists, and in the last two months, 1000 residents in Queen's Park, Harrow Road, Westbourne and Church Street have signed a pledge of support for the continued work of the Forums.

The small staff team at PDT also includes local residents. With more than 100 years of experience working for residents in Paddington, the team has commitment and staying power.

This deep reserve of experience and the extensive relationships that the staff are able to draw on both in the community and among partner agencies is threatened by the Government's cuts in spending.

Despite recognising PDT's work as a model of Big Society in action, the Government has stripped funding to support resident activity through the Neighbourhood Forums in Paddington from January 2011. The 100% funding cut has already led to a reduction in staffing at the four Neighbourhood Forums, with further redundancies due at Christmas, and possible suspension of all funded activity in some areas from April.

This could mean the closure of some neighbourhood centres. The future of other services supported by the Forums is also at stake: community festivals, targeted gang outreach services, some activities for elderly and isolated residents, and much more besides. Residents will do what they can to keep things going, but there's a limit to what can be done for free; and backup with funding and coordination is essential.

The risk of what could be lost has helped to galvanise residents who are embracing the challenge with dignity and determination. Residents spanning all social, political and ethnic groups are now meeting weekly across Paddington to ensure the efforts of the last 10 years are not dashed. They have vowed that the Neighbourhood Forums will continue, and will redouble their efforts to ensure this.

Facts & Figures

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- 20% of all households have joined PDT's Neighbourhood Forum mailing lists.
- In the last two months, 1000 residents in Queen's Park, Harrow Road, Westbourne and Church Street signed a pledge of support for the continued work of PDT.
- 2250 residents voted in the last neighbourhood elections for Queen's Park, Westbourne and Church Street wards.

So what happens next?

Together, the community, public, and private sectors have built relationships, developed skills, and become expert in the needs and capabilities of our local community. Local people have been part of delivering projects, programmes and activities, and even shaped plans for new buildings and public spaces.

These successes have been shared, but we are now at a critical point on this journey where we need to do even more to ensure continued progress. We must come up with new ways of working together, losing neither the skills nor knowledge built up over the years, nor the involvement of local residents.

Public spending cuts pose a major obstacle to the ways we must work together; but the possibilities presented by the Big Society idea – that with less public money local communities should ‘grow their own’ solutions to local problems – should ‘play to the strengths’ we have built up in Paddington.



Philip Wolmuth

There's a need for more ambitious community-based delivery to move 'into the market', providing local solutions to local problems in fields where local knowledge and cooperation can make a difference.

This requires the energy and creativity of local volunteers. It also needs a business-like and professional

approach – especially in poorer neighbourhoods like ours. The issues are serious, and addressing them is a serious business.

“ Our message is clear: Let's keep going! We will carry on working with and for our neighbourhoods in hard times as well as good. ”

The key to Big Society is to maintain the relationships, knowledge and skills that are necessary for effective action. The neighbourhood forum boards, elected by local people, have been adamant that the work will continue. Local residents have been clear that for their voluntary input they expect continued professional support.

PDT is committed to staying the course and providing this support – bringing people together, providing back up with professional skills, and helping to convert good local ideas into action. And critically, seeking the funds needed to deliver.

Our message is clear: Let's keep going! We will carry on working with and for our neighbourhoods in hard times as well as good.

Seeing how far the community has come together over the last 10 years provides inspiration and belief that Paddington people can stand up to the challenges of the next 10 years,

and prevail. It comes down to redoubling our efforts in these difficult times to promote and hold on to what we value about our local community. From a simple smile to a gesture of good neighbourliness, we must try even harder to behave like the community we want to be part of.

If you would like to join PDT and partners in continuing the good work in the community, please get in touch via our website at www.pdt.org.uk

There are plenty of ways to get involved in contributing to Big Society, so let's keep going!

Here's what local residents who take part in community life say:

“ I'm involved because I believe it's important we care about all the residents in our neighbourhood. The Forum is about encouraging community. It's well connected, linking services with the neighbourhood and making the links, helping as an umbrella voice for all the estates and roads in our area. ”

—Will Windham

“ I can relate to people in the Forum which gives me a sense of belonging. It's rare to bring together such a mix of people. The Forum is open and friendly and I like what it stands for. It's transparent and consistent, not pushing an agenda, just what's best for this community. ”

—Shamsa Hersi

Keep the discussion going at
www.pdt.org.uk