



# LONDON

## A home for young people?



evident  
wealth  
display

A lack of  
socialisation  
when new  
residents  
move in

Renting/  
owning  
property if  
impossible



# HOUSING

Compromising the  
local wellbeing  
of its residents

Constant disrepair  
and  
ignored Respects

psychological  
effects of  
poor housing  
environments

Families living in  
overcrowded  
homes and not  
being prioritised

"cutting down a 200yr old tree and planting  
a new one isn't replacing the same thing"  
Demolishing of houses and  
rebuilding  
I would hope that other  
factors such as culture,  
social spaces and sustainability  
are taken into account, instead  
of "it's cheaper to demolish & rebuild"

inequality between social  
& private housing  
better services, security,  
concierges, pools etc.

increasing rent & prices  
low family  
homes - also low quality  
in regenerated areas

Problems with housing in London that young people discussed during one of the project's workshops.

# Introduction

This document highlights the main points discussed in a series of workshops where young people and decision makers came together to address challenges arising from widespread urban regeneration in London. It calls for action from property developers, local authorities, and housing landlords to prioritise the well-being and voices of young people in London's regeneration efforts. The last section includes pledges made by decision makers and practitioners who participated in the final workshop.

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Urban regeneration affects the lives of young people and their families across London. It causes disruption to communities and leads to significant changes to the infrastructure and identity of neighbourhoods, especially when housing demolition is involved. Some regeneration projects span a decade or two, encompassing crucial life stages for children and young people as their local environments undergo transformation.

Research by Dr Rana Khazbak (2021)<sup>1</sup> has found that while regeneration may improve neighbourhood facilities and housing and attract businesses, many young people, particularly those from lower-income and ethnically minoritised communities, face barriers to benefiting from such improvements. Regeneration efforts can reinforce the disadvantages and injustices young people experience in the city. Many young people experience stigma, exclusion from public spaces, marginalisation in decision-making processes, detachment from their communities and live in unequal neighbourhoods. For some, the cost of living in regenerated neighbourhoods becomes too high, adding financial strain to their families and forcing them to relocate.

Building on this research, Dr Khazbak hosted a collaborative workshop on August 31, 2023 at King's College London, which brought together young people, decision makers and practitioners from the housing sector, local government, charities and the Greater London Authority. The workshop, which was part of the 'London: A home for young people?' project, was organised in partnership with Hiba Ahmad (The Advocacy Academy), Luke Billingham (Hackney Quest), Rico Prince (My Place) and Emily Health (The Young People Action Group, London's Violence Reduction Unit).

The workshop sought to create a platform for dialogue and collaboration between young people and decision makers, aiming to develop solutions to some of the challenges faced by youth during community regeneration. It included discussions around three main themes:

- 1 Dignified homes**
- 2 Responsible regeneration, and**
- 3 Access and opportunities.**

The themes were chosen by a group of 13 young people (16–25 years) who live in different parts of London and are passionate about having a voice in changes taking place in their communities. They participated in three workshops in the summer of 2023 prior to the 31 August where they shared their experiences, agreed on priority issues and planned for the workshop with decision makers.

<sup>1</sup> Khazbak R (2021) "They've come into our area and they're tryna make us feel like we don't belong here": Young people's wellbeing and mixed income social housing regeneration. PhD thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science.

# Dignified homes

Young people told us that living in unsafe and overcrowded housing that suffers from consistent disrepair, mould and damp not only has a negative effect on their physical health but is also detrimental to their mental and social wellbeing. According to them, young people and other community members living in places with poor conditions are less likely to invite friends over leading to social isolation and poor mental health. Overcrowding can also negatively affect young people's relationships with their family members.

Living in a place or neighbourhood that seems like it's not cared for and where residents' complaints are neglected impacts on young people's sense of efficacy which may in turn influence their overall life outlook, leading them to feel powerless and incapable of affecting change.

Additionally, young people and decision makers discussed how it's become near impossible for young people to rent or own homes in London. High rent levels affect young people's ability to afford food, socialise with their friends and live independently. Some decision makers attending the workshop mentioned that landlords exploit the difficult housing market by not upkeeping their properties leaving young people with no choice but to endure poor living conditions. According to a recent national survey young people (18-34 years) are three times (18 per cent) more likely to be living in poor quality housing than people over 45 (Try 2023<sup>2</sup>).

2 Try, L (2023) Trying times: How people living in poor quality housing have fared during the cost of living crisis. Resolution Foundation. <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/trying-times>

## Young people want to live in 'dignified homes'

**With decent conditions:** clean, have structural integrity, quality fittings, adequate day light and receive regular and timely repair.

**Where rent levels allow them to afford their basic needs,** socialise with their friends and live independently.

**Where they can have privacy** (eg for siblings) but at the same time are conducive of social interactions and good relationships with their families.

**Where they have some discretion over decoration** to make it their own and feel like home.

**Where they are listened to by landlords** and treated with respect.

**That meet the size needs** of different types of households across all tenures.

**With sufficient and adequate outdoor and green public spaces** that are safe, free, welcoming, accessible and inclusive of everyone.

**Where they feel safe.**

**Have good transport links of all kinds,** including cycling infrastructure and storage.

# What should be done?

Young people and decision makers attending the workshop agreed on a number of asks from policy and decision makers and practitioners in housing, local government (local authorities and the Greater London Authority), urban planning and property development sectors.

## 1

### Build more social housing

- Building more social housing should be a condition on regeneration projects.
- Amend financial viability processes to close loopholes that allow developers to avoid their obligations for building social housing.
- Provide financial and in-kind support (discounted public land, expertise) for community land trusts to build and maintain genuinely affordable homes.

## 2

### Create routes for youth home ownership

- Introduce affordable, subsidised compact units to facilitate young people's entry into homeownership.

## 3

### Institute rent controls

- Institute rent controls to address housing affordability.

## 4

### Strengthen the regulatory framework

- Establish a stronger regulatory framework to hold landlords and estate management agents accountable for housing conditions.

## 5

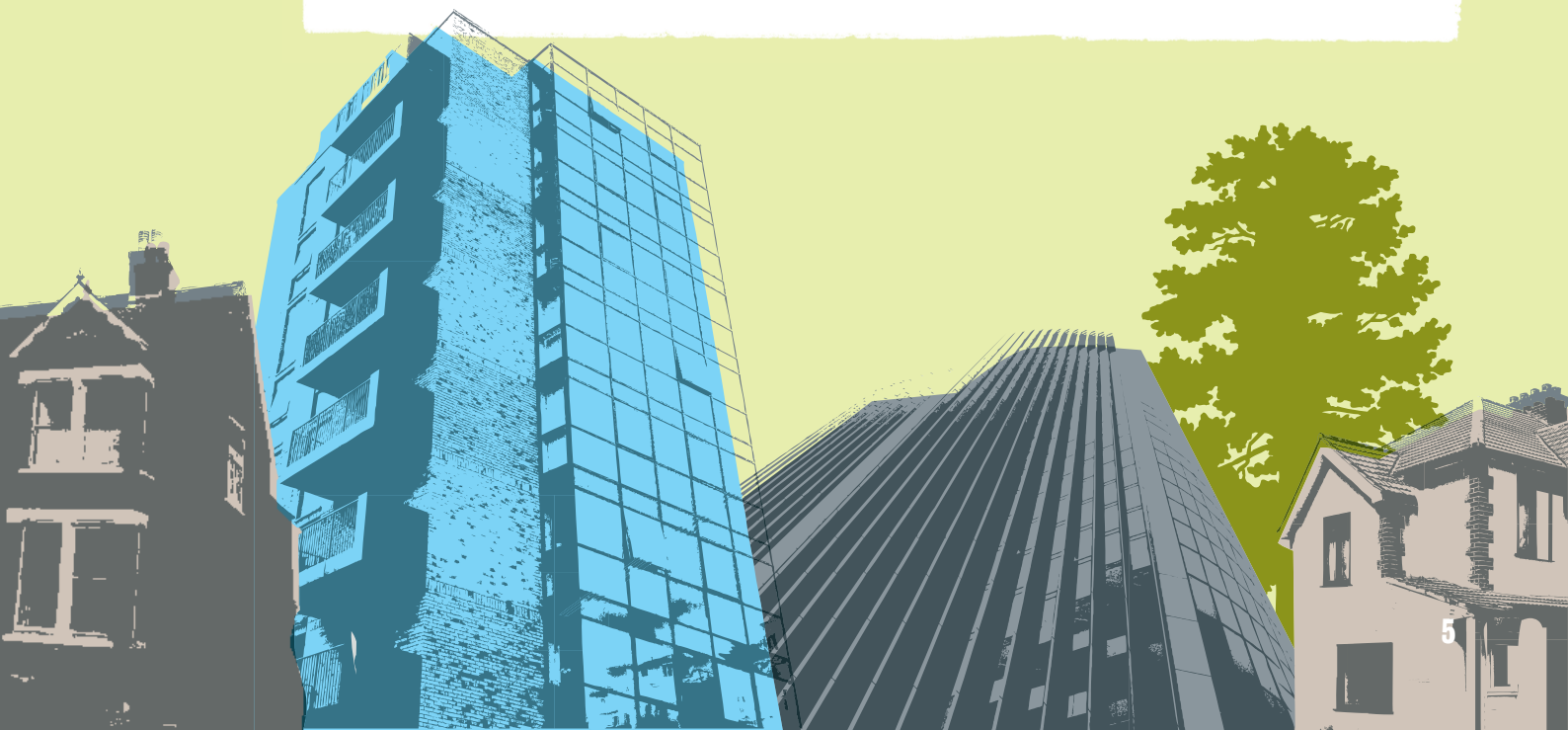
### Establish efficient complaint and reporting systems

- Implement efficient and user-friendly complaint and repair reporting systems.

## 6

### Design safe neighbourhoods

- Design well-lit streets and public spaces to allow for natural social surveillance.
- Ensure proper security measures for all housing tenures, with timely repairs of broken gates and security systems.
- Include sufficient and secure bike storage facilities.



① What is diversity good for  
 communities? - their experience  
 How to preserve communities?  
 How they do it?  
 What kinds of homes are being built?  
 Why is diversity good for communities?  
 How to preserve communities?  
 How they do it?  
 What kinds of homes are being built?

affordable commercial rent to preserve local small business

Protect + celebrate cultural heritage

include in...

create more spaces for young people + families

# Responsible Regeneration

③ What is the impact of regeneration on communities?

Relocation / displacement

Not taken out of community

Diversity + inclusive spaces, or different:  
 - ages  
 - incomes  
 - interests  
 - culture

Facilitate human interaction  
 - reduce barriers  
 - increase  
 advertising to attract communities + encourage different practices  
 something for

Parks not catered to young people

# Responsible regeneration

Under the theme of responsible regeneration, decision makers and young people discussed how financial considerations tend to take precedence over social and environmental concerns when considering the demolition of housing estates. The long-term disruption to communities caused by housing demolition is often overlooked in the calculation of cost. Young people whose estate has undergone demolition and regeneration said that drastic change to their homes and neighbourhoods erases their memories and histories negatively impacting their wellbeing (Khazbak 2021)<sup>3</sup>.

At the workshops, young people also talked about how their connections within their communities are ruptured when their families and neighbours are moved to different, distant areas while awaiting the demolition and reconstruction of their homes. After years of demolition and reconstruction, some people either choose not to return or can no longer afford to reside in the same area.

They also talked about how construction is usually intrusive to the life of the community: public spaces where young people and other residents typically gather for socialising (eg football pitches and parks) may be fenced off and dominated by cranes and construction materials.

Young people told decision makers that regeneration can make places feel exclusive, expensive, and that you have to fit a particular profile to live there. Young people are often deliberately prevented from accessing new upmarket cafes and restaurants in regenerated places (Khazbak 2021). Meanwhile, shops offering culturally specific food and services are usually forced to close or get priced out due to increasing commercial rents. They are often replaced with more expensive retail that is inaccessible for many young people and existing communities. This was also evident in Khazbak's research. Consequently, young people and others who have lived there for a long time lose their sense of place and belonging, which are important factors for their wellbeing.

Another issue discussed is the social division that results from the lack of integration between existing communities and wealthier residents who move into regeneration areas. Workshop participants (decision makers and young people) made an analogy between this and migration; while migrants often feel pressured to adapt to English society, wealthier residents do not face the same expectations when they move to areas with well-established communities.

Community engagement was an important topic of discussion at the workshop. Participants mentioned that many regeneration schemes in London do a poor job in including and listening to the voices of their communities. Where it happens, engagement typically includes a small group of residents not reflective of the diversity in the community. This problem is especially acute in long term regeneration processes. There is often too much focus on 'process over people': regeneration decision makers tend to prioritise protocols, action plans, and the overall procedures rather than beginning with genuine engagement with different community groups and understanding their needs.

Research shows that young people are among the groups most marginalised from regeneration decision making. Youth consultations are usually tokenistic, ad-hoc and planned around narrow questions that do not address their most significant concerns (Khazbak 2021). Young people reiterated this at the workshop where they expressed that they often feel their needs and opinions are overlooked. This erodes trust in decision makers, exacerbating young people's sense of alienation and disengagement.

Workshop participants also mentioned that power disparities between communities and decision-makers pose a substantial obstacle to addressing their needs. Young people and other marginalised community groups often lack awareness of their rights and face challenges when navigating complex regeneration systems. This hinders their capacity to advocate for themselves and assert their rights.

<sup>3</sup> Khazbak R (2021) Ibid.

Young people who participated in this project defined responsible regeneration as one that:

**Preserves communities' culture and heritage.**

**Has community needs at its heart.**

**Puts voices of the community as a priority.**

**Is inclusive of diverse communities**, in terms of age, class, ethnicity, and income level.

## What should be done?

Decision makers and young people agreed that regeneration policy and practice need to change to achieve this, putting forward the following asks:

### Preserve communities' cultural diversity and heritage

# 7

#### Do not demolish homes

- Demolition of housing estates should always be an absolute last resort. Prioritise ongoing refurbishment and in-fill construction as the primary methods for housing estate development. This approach is more environmentally friendly, socially beneficial, and economically sound.

undergoing regeneration to reduce long-term displacement. For example, build energy efficient homes to reduce energy bills, design safe cycling infrastructure and incentivise affordable retail.

# 8

#### Respect 'right of return'

- If demolition is unavoidable, ensure residents are rehoused near their existing communities during the building process, unless they wish otherwise.
- Residents should always have the right and be given priority to return to their neighbourhoods.

# 10

#### Preserve neighbourhood character and community spaces

- Preserve the character of neighbourhoods when refurbishing or replacing existing housing by retaining local shops, landmarks, murals, etc. Consult with local residents to identify elements that should be preserved.
- Community spaces should be the last or first places to be redeveloped so that they continue to be open throughout regeneration projects.
- Provide alternative spaces during the refurbishment, utilising empty commercial spaces.
- Provide affordable commercial rent to preserve local small businesses.

# 9

#### Plan for increasing cost of living

- Consider the increasing cost of living in the design of homes and neighbourhoods



## Foster inclusive and diverse communities, in terms of age, class, ethnicity, and income level

### 11

#### Maintain open communication

- Ensure accessible communication about regeneration for all residents including young people and those who don't have English as a first language. Eg use communication channels popular among young people to spread knowledge about housing, rights, regeneration, complaints, consultations, etc. (eg social media, school newsletters, etc.).
- Partner with knowledge brokers (eg youth ambassadors, community leaders) who are embedded within communities to ensure effective outreach.



### 12

#### Design inclusive spaces

- Ensure all public spaces (eg parks and playgrounds) are accessible to all residents regardless of their housing tenure, age and social background.
- Design residential buildings with well-maintained common areas to encourage neighbourly interactions.

### 13

#### Create and protect youth spaces

- Regeneration budgets should allocate funding for building youth spaces catering to young people aged 13 and above.
- Create free safe spaces where young people can 'just be', to socialise with friends freely and independently.
- Include young people in the design of youth spaces.

## Centre community and youth needs and voices

### 14

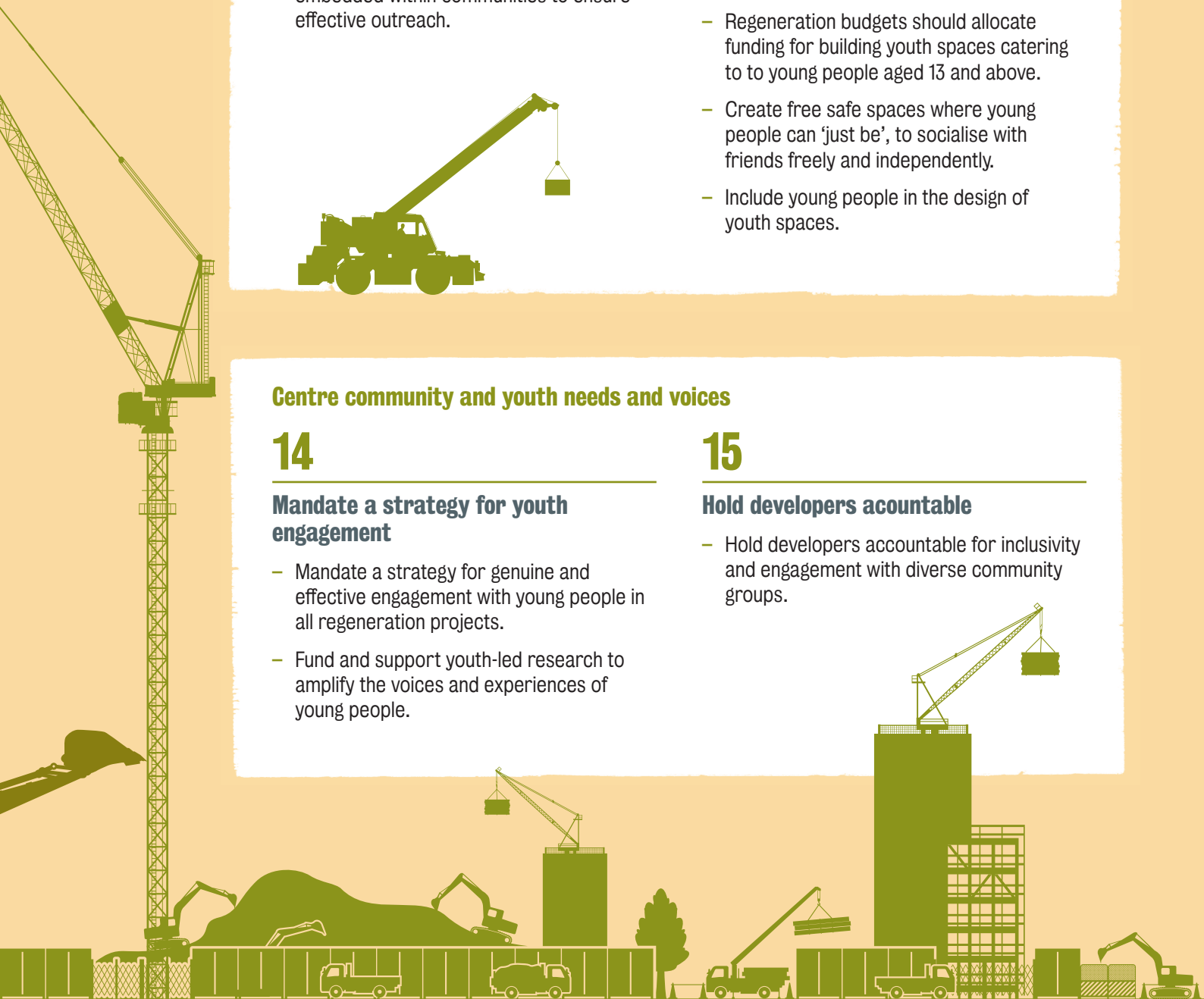
#### Mandate a strategy for youth engagement

- Mandate a strategy for genuine and effective engagement with young people in all regeneration projects.
- Fund and support youth-led research to amplify the voices and experiences of young people.

### 15

#### Hold developers accountable

- Hold developers accountable for inclusivity and engagement with diverse community groups.



# Access and opportunities

Money is detrimental to young people's ability to live a good and safe life for their wellbeing and future development. Young people thought that supporting them with access to opportunities should be central to regeneration planning. At the workshops, they talked about how 'being a young person is expensive'; available jobs are insecure and low paid and cost of living (housing, food, travel, leisure) is high. Many of them do not have needed access to training and find competitive job application processes a big barrier to employment. The high cost of living in London combined with lack of opportunities push some young people towards illegal activities or put them at risk of criminal exploitation.

Young people told us that urban regeneration often either relocates crime from one area to another or it exacerbates the underlying factors contributing to youth criminal activity. Khazbak's research found that as urban regeneration in London is often accompanied by increased housing costs and more expensive retail, families on low-incomes struggle financially and some young people feel compelled to contribute to their household finances. A lack of jobs and opportunities may force them to turn to illegal money-making activities.

Additionally, young people and decision makers discussed the lack of access to 'free' safe youth spaces for socialising and participating in after-school activities. Over the years, hundreds of youth clubs have closed, resulting in the loss of a vital protective and preventative service for young people. Young people are also increasingly being pushed out of the limited spaces available to them to hang out safely, such as fast-food restaurants and shopping malls. Research showed that regeneration schemes frequently prioritise building playgrounds for younger children while allocating fewer resources to spaces for youth between the ages of 13 and 20, such as football fields or places to socialise (Khazbak 2021; Brown and Lees 2009<sup>4</sup>). Outdoor youth spaces earmarked for demolition are sometimes left in disrepair for extended periods and are not eventually replaced.

4 Brown N and Lees L (2009) Young people and the regeneration of the King's Cross Ten Estates. In R. Imrie, L. Lees, M. Raco, eds. Regenerating London: Governance, sustainability and community in a global city. New York: Routledge. pp. 289–309.



Issues related to youth spaces in London discussed by young people during one of the project's workshops

# What should be done?

## Create pathways to opportunities

### 16

#### Create youth hubs

- Create locally based youth opportunity hubs where young people can seek advice on finding and applying for jobs and other opportunities, deliver career talks, skills training, etc.

### 17

#### Fund youth training and employment

- Allocate funding from regeneration budgets to cover cost of apprenticeships, college courses, mentoring, etc.

### 18

#### Advertise opportunities 'fairly'

- Do not advertise only to those already engaging with a narrow network of organisations.
- Local authorities, third sector and housing landlords should improve their social media outreach and build a young audience, eg hire young people to run social media strategies, accounts.
- Increase awareness of parents about opportunities available for their children.
- Advertise opportunities in all languages spoken by community members to remove barriers for those whose English is not a first language.

## Create opportunities

### 19

#### Form public-private partnerships

- Form partnerships between councils, housing associations and the private sector to offer jobs to young people. Eg, include job opportunities in leasing terms for commercial spaces.
- Councils, housing associations and developers to upskill young people within own community and employ them to work on regeneration projects, eg as trades workers, builders, engineers, etc.

### 20

#### Create inclusive and equitable job opportunities

- Create job opportunities with inclusive and non-competitive application processes, such as lotteries, to allow young people to gain skills for future opportunities.
- Young people must be paid a minimum of the London Living Wage.
- Create youth volunteering schemes which reimburse travel and lunch.

THE WALL OF

# PLEDGES

ACTIONS BIG & SMALL TO  
MAKE LONDON A BETTER  
HOME FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

These are pledges for action and change made by decision makers based on their discussions with young people at the final project workshop.

Pledge	Name, role
<p>Extend the peer research programme to amplify young people's voices in decision making across the housing sector.</p> <p>Take social value pledge ask to the Social Value Leadership Group (SVLG) regarding developing a set of pledges that makes communities have significant voice in social value spending in regeneration.</p> <p>Peer research leads to developing homes for young people and new housing models.</p>	<p><b>Sarah Willis</b> Head of Strategic Partnerships &amp; National Delivery, MTVH</p>
<p>I pledge to set up a Youth Ambassadors group to help gather data from the local community to help shape our next regeneration scheme.</p>	<p><b>Natalie Down</b> Senior Regeneration Manager, Clarion</p>
<p>I pledge to continue co-production with young people, to have their views at the heart of projects and decisions.</p>	<p><b>Nora Zia</b> Youth Research Officer, Partnership for Young London</p>
<p>I pledge to utilise my position in big conversations to voice the ideas that my local hubs and communities that are viewed as inaccessible will benefit from.</p>	<p><b>Hannah</b> Peer Researcher, My Place</p>
<p>All opportunities must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- paid</li> <li>- advertised fairly</li> <li>- with less selective application processes that don't require experience.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Sophie Williams</b> Neighbourhood regeneration manager, Lambeth Council</p>
<p>I pledge to create an opportunity network.</p>	<p><b>Jerome Harvey-Agyei</b> Youth Participation Lead, London's Violence Reduction Unit</p>

I pledge to spread the word about opportunities I hear about and make sure the youth I know can stay informed.	<b>Michael McFarlane</b> Peer Outreach Worker, Greater London Authority
I pledge to ensure our community needs assessments are informed by young people and give them direct input into designing safe spaces in their area.	<b>Ali Kelly</b> Principal Monitoring & Evaluation Officer, London's Violence Reduction Unit
Encourage local authorities to promote opportunities to colleges and schools.  Charities to visit schools to gain younger audience.  Also, the use of social media is important.	<b>Victoria Odude</b> Peer Outreach Worker, Greater London Authority
I pledge to continue working with local organisations to advocate for the voices of community members to ensure their needs are heard by authorities and used in future planning.	<b>Julia Szumilas</b> Peer Researcher, My Place
I pledge to encourage and to continue to use work of mouth to promote young people.	<b>Oscar Kibila</b> Board member, GLA (London youth recovery board)
More inclusive work with young people – not just 'selective' groups of young people. Making sure to reach harder to access young people and including them in our work.	<b>Amy Dicks</b> Policy Manager, The Children's Society
Share key findings and children and young people's views across The Children's Society.	
Continue to push for more youth clubs, services and finding at national government policy level.	
Look at what The Children's Society can do to offer and promote more volunteering opportunities for children and young people.	
Look at ways to sustain and grow the Woodberry Down My Place project including how we can create a space.  Look at ways the community and young people can influence how the social value of the scheme should be used.  Create a (paid) opportunity for a young person/people to manage and communicate our opportunities to young people.	<b>Samantha Cheadle</b> Social and Economic Programme Manager, Notting Hill Genesis
Works towards developing better support systems and access to support for young people, such as CV advice, job boards, housing advice in schools, colleges, unis, youth services, etc.	<b>Remi Looi-Somoye</b> Policy Officer, the Children's Society
I pledge to engage more with young people and involve them in our projects on estate regeneration.	<b>Geraldine Dening</b> Founder, Architects for Social Housing (ASH)
I pledge to continue foregrounding youth voices in my research by using youth-centred participatory methods that give young people more power in shaping all stages for the research process.	<b>Rana Khazbak</b> Postdoctoral Research Fellow, King's College London

Demolition not necessarily negative. <sup>sometimes homes are too old, are too old, are too old, are too old,</sup> creates more housing problem: ppl aren't properly relocated or can't go back.

- destroys community
- older residents can't afford new housing

Relocation  
decenting

don't move ppl far from their area.  
lost of history

- affects most people
- positive & negative significance

## Community & Belonging.

- Culture & Sense of Community ① destroyed/ altered

Re-generation knocks down significant buildings where people have lived for generations.

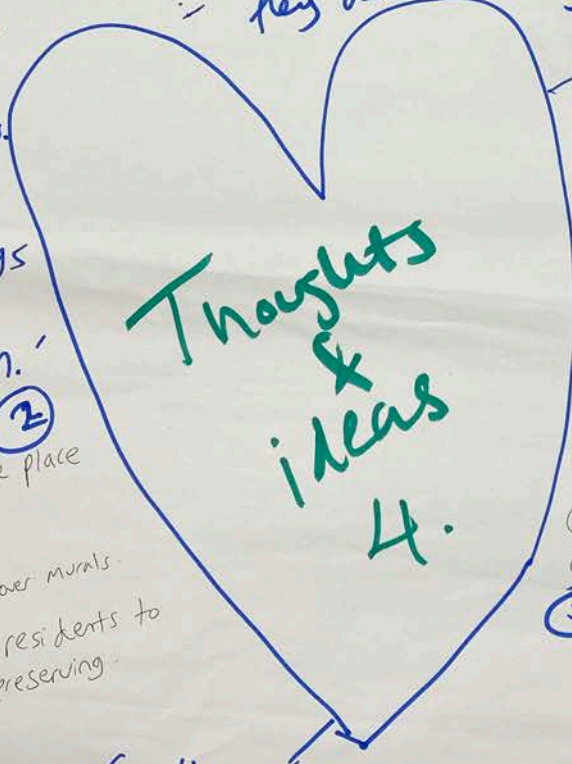
New buildings are often really 'uniform.'

Memories are lost.

People feel like they don't belong

Re-landscaping areas makes people feel lost. ②

Could preserve layout to ensure people don't feel lost. Keeping big/small structure.



Community & Sense of belonging can take years to build & create stories & identities. How can you create space where people feel they belong whilst regenerating?

- ↳ Memorable spaces e.g. garden @ British Library
- ↳ Community spaces to be the last first thing to be changed. Still hosting community events

### SOLUTIONS: ②

- ↳ Keep the style of the place
- ↳ Keeping the same shops
- ↳ Not painting over murals
- ↳ Consulting with local residents to identify what needs preserving.

Culture / diversity being replaced & losing sense of traditions.

Each area could have events that celebrate culture & diversity of people

Belonging = ④

- Being welcomed in a space.
- Having somewhere you can just 'be.'
- A safe neutral space

Problems and solutions under the theme of 'community and belonging' that young people discussed during a workshop.