Building the World's First Restorative Justice Postcode

8th Quarterly Impact Report

July - September 2025

Speak-up! Restorative Justice Circles

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Restorative Justice for All International Institute
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SE 16

RJ4ALL BUILDING THE WORLD'S FIRST
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE POSTCODE

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Executive Summary

Background

In January 2023, the Restorative Justice for All International Institute (hereafter RJ4All) began a long-term mission to establish the world's first restorative justice postcode project in SE16. This mission aims to serve RJ4All's holistic approach to harm prevention and community cohesion.

What does success look like?

The postcode programme was designed as a long-term vision. Within this vision, we set 10 years as the time framework that will scientifically test the following outcomes:

Community cohesion is improved through a more equal distribution of local power, and the implementation of the restorative justice values of power-sharing, equality, dignity, respect and involvement in decision-making.	Poverty and disadvantage leading to community tensions and violence are reduced through the provision of a holistic, local offer owned by the community (e.g. foodbank, physical and mental health services, education and volunteering).	Recorded crime and anti-social behaviour are reduced through relationship building between local government, the community sector, housing providers, schools and criminal justice agencies as well as between state agents and community members.	Hate attitudes, xenophobia and exclusion, gender-based violence and discrimination are reduced through community-based approaches and voice.
Police and criminal justice case-load is increasingly diverted to community-based approaches such as restorative justice both prior and post-prosecution.	Conflicts in formal (e.g. schools) and informal (e.g. youth clubs) educational settings and bullying are reduced through an increase in educators and youth workers' knowledge, skills and awareness of restorative justice including peer mediation.	Residents' conflicts, antisocial behaviour and youth violence are reduced in housing estates, local businesses and the community through empowerment and our positive approach vs the deficit model of reducing risk.	The community's wellbeing, voice and confidence is improved providing real evidence of impact at the local, national and international levels.

Three years later and RJ4All continues to track and monitor its service outcomes provided within its premises located in Rotherhithe Community Centre, SE16, aiming to tackle the root causes of inequality, power imbalance, marginalisation, and power abuse. We have evidence to believe that these issues can later lead to anti-social behaviour, insecurity, division, and tension, which we seek to prevent and eliminate. Our services embody Restorative Justice values and its ethos for a better neighbourhood, aiming at a later stage to influence the implementation of other restorative justice postcodes across the UK and internationally.

This report is the 8th qualitative impact report of the project and reflects the outcome of our last Restorative Justice Speak Up! Circle in September 2025. This was held with community members during a celebration event that was held at our headquarters. It follows the series of Speak Up! Circles started in 2023, contributing to an ongoing collection of quantitative and qualitative evidence for our Postcode Project. Those Speak Up! Circles are supported by Rotherhithe Consolidated Charities, a local funder and a member of our Postcode Project's Steering Group.

It is a continuation of learning and growing as a user-led organisation from the insights we received from our very first Speak Up! Circle that was held in March 2020 to discuss the changes that the local community had gone through in the previous years, including Canada Water's Master Plan, Crime Prevention and safety, local opportunities, housing crisis, and more. This circle was part of our "Speak Up!" project, funded by Southwark Council, to encourage our local community to gather, share experiences, and provide recommendations to local decision-makers. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Speak Up! Circles were paused before returning in March 2023 as part of our SE16 Postcode Project, where they have continued and progressed thanks to the engagement and enthusiasm of participants.

This series of reports involves the collection and analysis of qualitative narratives shared through the Speak Up! Circles, enabling a continued evaluation of the project's effects and the development of recommendations aimed at achieving three key objectives.

1. Inform the RJ4All team and the project's Steering Group
2. Facilitate continued project development
3. Function as a strategic communication resource for other stakeholders.

Summary findings from the third quarter of the third year of the project

Key themes:

- ***Interrelation of Isolation and Insecurity***
- ***Visibility and Accessibility of Resources***
- ***Embedded Resources with Local Knowledge***
- ***Sustaining Long-Term Community Relationships and Investment***
- ***Community Responsibility***
- ***Need of Safe Community Spaces and Forums***

Participation

In total, 13 community members participated directly in the circle, in addition to a circle facilitator or 'keeper of the circle', and an additional note taker. The Speak Up! Circle lasted one hour, and participants were asked questions centred on the topic of community safety in SE16.

1.) What does community safety mean to you?
2.) What are the main concerns or sources of concern around community safety in SE16?
3.) What potential solutions are there for the issues raised on community safety?
4.) What can RJ4All do specifically to help enhance community safety?

This Speak Up! Circle was part of a wider event attended by 51 community and RJ4All members that took part in community cohesion activities and was held as a vital part of this whole day event to emphasise the voices of the community members. The event was attended by

community members and stakeholders, including a local MP. In addition to the results of the direct Speak Up! Circle reported on here, the whole community event was on the topic of community safety[1]. Those who attended the event were given information on the Postcode Project, asked about their experience of community cohesion activities, the RJ4All Community Centre and related projects, and concerns and points they wished to address about community safety in the area in general. The local MP, Neil Coyle, held a speech related to the topic, explaining what action local representation was taking and took questions from community members. An emphasis on local concerns about police resources being drawn back and how that was currently being addressed was a key feature of the discussion. Neil Coyle MP highlighted that we should expect more police and SNT presence. Theo Gavrielides, RJ4All Founder and Director, raised points for discussion based on the organisation's aims about positive collaboration with local police and SNTs through offering training in restorative justice practices and principals. Community members were allowed opportunity and space to communicate directly with the local MP beyond their attendance in the Speak Up! Circle discussions.

1. Introduction and Purpose of the Paper

Substantial evidence indicates that power abuse acts as a central factor in the underlying inequalities, unmet mental health needs, and human rights violations. This needs urgent action to correct power imbalances and emphasise community voices. Through community consultation forums, RJ4All creates a space to enhance local perspectives and insights on our local area, and to receive feedback and suggestions on the services we provide.

As we are nearing the end of the third year of the project, it became important to return to some of the insecurities highlighted in the community through a different theme, with the focus on community safety for this circle. Therefore, using a focus group research method, we held our 9th

[1] Please see other data collected on community safety during the day in our other qualitative report via this link.

Speak Up! Circle in September 2025 to explore the idea of **community safety** with a sample of residents and stakeholders in the local area. This topic aligns with our project's aims of community empowerment. We seek not only to recognise issues in the community but also to create a format to bring the community together as a counter to feelings of insecurity or isolation identified.

Therefore, this Speak Up! Circle was not only a forum (funded by Rotherhithe Consolidated Charities) but a part of a whole day event, 'Mayor's Community Weekend' that was funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and Mayor of London. The circle being part of a community celebration aimed to foster community dialogue, empowerment, and power-sharing by including local service users and representatives in one space. Speak Up! Circles are community forums where we invite people who relate to, affect, or are affected by the ongoings of the community to discuss specific topics. However, it is not just a discussion, it is an important format and drive to bring people together to find solutions. This within itself is an act of furthering community safety. Dialogue is an important pillar stone of restorative justice principles (Gavrielides, 2020a; Umbreit & Armour, 2010). The act of bringing people together for discussions can create understanding and an improved sense of community cohesion.

This report will be a reflection of the dialogue and discussion created through this format. It is also a continuation of reporting on the ongoing developments within SE16 as part of the Postcode Project. We analyse and report on the data to contribute validity to the circle and allow for an expression of the group into tangible insights and recommendations for RJ4All, the community, and relevant stakeholders. Therefore, this report will analyse and discuss the qualitative and quantitative data collected through the forum.

2. Research Methodology and Sampling

This report draws on a qualitative methodology designed to capture the voices and perspectives of community members through the Speak Up! Circle, held as part of the Postcode Project. The

approach is not intended to provide a statistically representative account of all residents but instead offers a sample representation of those who chose to participate. The findings presented here reflect recurring themes, concerns, and recommendations raised during the forum and are analysed in relation to impact reports from previous years.

The methodology is centred on participatory engagement, ensuring that community members' experiences and reflections are documented, respected, and translated into actionable insights.

By combining recruitment and attendance processes, transparent consent procedures, and systematic data collection and analysis, this report aims to provide a trustworthy summary of discussions while acknowledging its limitations as a partial snapshot of the community.

2.1. Recruitment Process

Participants were recruited through several means. A dedicated website and information page on the topic were created and linked to the general project page, which was also shared via social media. Direct invitations were sent to community stakeholders including local organisations and charities, schools, the Criminal Justice Service, local councillors, and MPs. These contacts were drawn both from our existing database and from networks developed through our wider community work. Local community members were engaged through ongoing relationships built with service users at the Community Centre, with invitations extended in person as well as through our WhatsApp community group chat and volunteer networks.

This approach reflects the continuity of the project, where recruitment is supported by relationships of trust with participants, many of whom are familiar with the outcomes of our work and the format of the circles. It also allows the method to evolve organically, with each conversation building on previous ones.

2.2. Participants

Participants joined the circle through online registration or via our open-door policy. As indicated above, this Speak Up! Circle was embedded within a wider community celebration, which created a relaxed and welcoming environment. Importantly, simultaneous activities for children were provided, enabling parents to participate fully. This family-friendly approach not only removed practical barriers but also reflected the project's wider commitment to building trust and making participation accessible to all members of the community. By creating a space that felt safe, familiar, and inclusive, more residents were encouraged to engage in the circle and related activities throughout the day.

A total of 13 participants took part in the Speak Up! Circle, supported by one facilitator and one additional minute taker. Attendance at the wider event varied across the day, with participants also contributing to other forms of data collection.

Participation was entirely voluntary, with no fees or monetary incentives provided. Care was taken to ensure that all participants understood the purpose of the project and what their involvement entailed. Information sheets and consent forms were provided to everyone, and demographic details were collected at each participant's discretion. Crucially, written informed consent was secured from all participants before they took part, to underscore the project's commitment to ethical practice and transparency, and ensure a user-led understanding and backing of the research and project.

2.3. Procedure

RJ4All as an organisation facilitated a semi-structured group discussion led by Ronja Healy Karlsson, Project Officer (Restorative Justice) and circle keeper in this particular circle, who encouraged participants to engage in the topic as equal community members, creating a space for

respectful conversation to be fostered, with emphasis on an agreement and commitment to partake in the circle and an understanding of the objective of it.

To start this circle, the facilitator shared the context and purpose of the discussion, by naming the topic as community safety in the area in order to allow for a safe place of discussion with the purpose of the conversation being utilised to gather a report to spotlight the ideas created. The action driven nature of this forum was emphasised, in contrast to a space to vent. After some context was provided and settlement of the group into the space of the circle was ensured, the circle keeper emphasised what a Speak Up! Circle meant and that it is being held in the format of a restorative justice circle. This to her meant treating everyone with respect, taking the time to listen, and take in the discussion to allow the space to be an act of community building and safety within itself. She read out standard ground rules that are a pillar stone of the RJ4ALL format of engaging in this form of dialogue, to ensure a safe, respectful, and productive dialogue. They include: 1) only speak when you have the talking piece, 2) share as much or as little as you like, 3) 'Speak and listen with intention', 5) 'Come curious', listen, and respond respectfully to each other and value people's perspective, and 4) you can take a break whenever you need, without needing to ask.

Emphasising the importance of this agreement upholds the integrity of the process throughout the circle. All participants agreed and did not have any objections or additions to what was asked. Then she invited all attendees to present themselves and the colour they were feeling themselves to be, explaining it as a way to check-in with the group and a way for people to present themselves without titles.

Each question was allowed a round in the circle with a talking piece; participants could choose to contribute or not and were encouraged to pass their opportunity on to the next person if they took too much time in relation to the rest of the group. This was to ensure time constraints were held and as a basic principle of the circle in which everyone is given equal opportunity to

contribute. Timing was kept and notes were taken from several sources, to retain integrity of data collection, aided by RJ4All intern Lani Wijaya.

Research Limitations

The recruitment process involved various engagement facets, including an open call on all RJ4All social media platforms, direct emailing to community members, stakeholders, and prior attendees, publication of our newsletter, and word of mouth. This was implemented to recruit a wide range of people from SE16 and Southeast London more broadly.

The non-probability sample of 13 individuals (excluding facilitator and note taker) is similar in size to the previous Speak Up! Circles. This small group size allows for deeper discussions compared to a larger one, where the time allocated to each participant would be more limited.

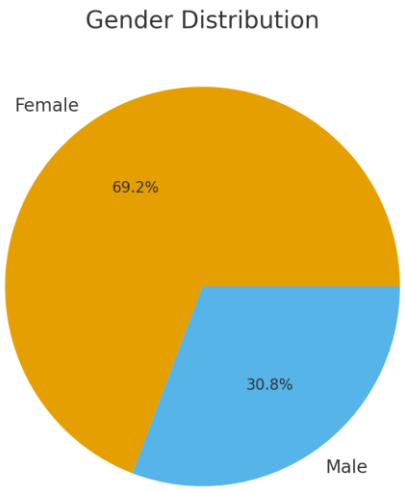
We acknowledge that this sample size may not reflect the entire SE16 community, with a limited demographic representation of age, gender, and ethnicity. Therefore, considering these limitations when deliberating on our recommendations is advised.

3. Quantitative Data Display

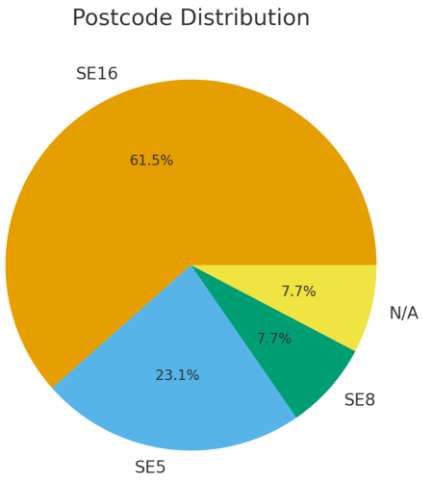
This section presents the demographics of the participants who attended the September 2025 Speak Up! Circle, including gender, postcode, ethnicity, and age demographics. In total, 13 participants (excluding RJ4All facilitator and note taker) attended this community circle.

Participants could choose whether to share their age or ethnicity. If they did not, 'ND' for 'Not Disclosed' is indicated in the chart.

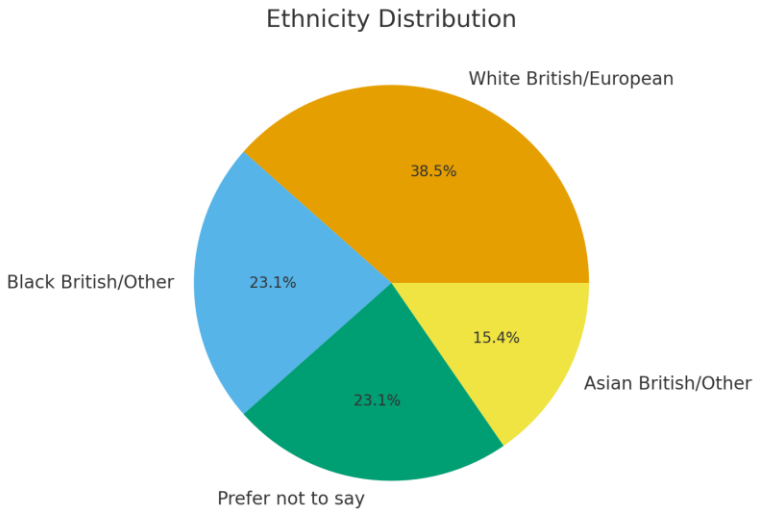
3.1. Gender Demographics



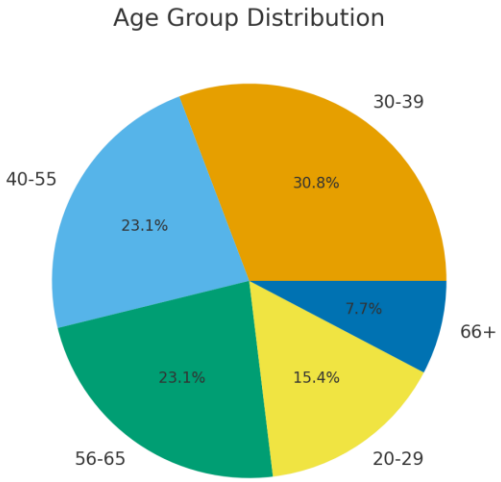
3.2. Postcode Demographics



3.3. Ethnicity Demographics



3.4. Age Demographics



4. Qualitative Data Display

4.1. Questions discussed

1.) What does community safety mean to you?

2.) What are the main concerns or sources of concern around community safety in SE16?

3.) What potential solutions are there for the issues raised on community safety?

4.) What can RJ4All do specifically to help enhance community safety?

4.2. Summary of Discussion

4.2.1. Meaning of Community Safety

The circle began with a discussion on **what community safety means** for the participants, as a way to acknowledge and understand how the perception of the topic can vary. When asked, participants described it as less about rules or policing and more about a lived feeling of comfort and ease. One person summed it up as *"walking down the street and feeling secure, safe, knowing some people,"* while another reflected that true safety is *"not thinking, not being cautious, a subconscious feeling."* Several participants echoed the idea that safety is felt when one can move freely without fear: *"feeling you can walk the street without being on edge."*

However, this feeling of security was highlighted as not being shared equally. Identity and lived experience shaped perceptions of safety. *"There is a different experience for minorities or for vulnerable groups,"* one person explained, while another said, *"when someone walks towards me on the street, I don't know what they think about women or people of colour or immigrants, and this is what I'm easily perceived as."* Women spoke about how rare it was to feel safe at night alone, even if the presence of others might bring reassurance that *"someone would step in and*

defend." Parents highlighted the role of safe spaces, with one mother emphasising: *"to have this Community Centre and feel like my kids can be safe here [is] important to have safe spaces."* For others, community safety was understood in comparison to experiences in the countries they have come from, as one participant originally from Ukraine explained *"England has provided a safe place for my kids and grandkids compared to the one we had."*

4.2.2. Main Sources of Concern for Community Safety in SE16

The second round of discussion was prompted by **what the main concerns or sources of concern are around community safety in SE16**, drawing out more specific challenges related to the particular community that the participants currently share, and in alignment of the Postcode Project aims. Crime was raised as a recurring issue, particularly *"drugs… houses get raided and you realise it's the families of someone my children go to school with."* Phone theft was described as a common occurrence: *"it happens weekly, you see it happen, and you don't know how to help them…there's no police around."* For others, the risks felt more diffused, such as constant fighting and swearing that young people are being subjected to or the wider sense of unease when walking alone at night. Security or a sense of safety was also put in connection to how institutions respond. Several participants spoke about a lack of trust, *"if you complain about your neighbours to authorities, you can feel targeted, there's no trust in the police or council."* Others described services as absent or disconnected, *"they say there's an anti-social behaviour team that works remotely, how is that any good? They don't see what's happening, they don't know the neighbourhood."* The absence of visible support left some residents expressing feelings of abandonment. As one put it, *"what's missing is you don't know where to go for support…you can spend an hour on a call contacting the person, but it still wouldn't go through."* Another explained the impact: *"people are overwhelmed, they don't know who to turn to…they end up calling Samaritans because they have ongoing issues with the neighbours and don't know a way out."*

While many acknowledged these insecurities, others placed them in context. *"Generally, I feel safe in the community, just have to take the precautions like you do everywhere, don't walk alone, don't go out at night, don't have your phone in your hand."* Some recognised that safety concerns are shaped by privilege and identity, as one participant reflected, *"as a white man [I know] safety concerns are affected by the identity I have."* There was also a sense of shared responsibility, *"as a community we need to take action and matters into our own hands…we have to lead as a community and be more hands on."* For some, the risks of living in SE16 were seen not as unique but as part of wider issues, *"it's not just London or the UK that's the problem, you have these issues everywhere."*

4.2.3. Potential solutions for concerns on community safety

The circle was brought into its next phase by being directed by the facilitator on to **potential solutions for the future** of the issues raised. Participants emphasised the importance of making resources visible and accessible. One resident explained, *"there may be resources available but where are they, making them easily accessible and that people know how to access them."* Others pointed out that many support systems have shifted online, creating barriers for those who are not digitally connected, along with creating a disconnection from what is happening on the ground in the community. The need for more support workers was raised repeatedly, alongside calls for funding to sustain these roles. Education was also raised as a point for a longer-term solution, helping to reduce polarisation and build understanding across different groups.

The role of police drew mixed responses. Some participants wanted *"more visual police in the area,"* arguing that visible presence can deter as well as provide a sense of security, while others highlighted the concern that more police was not the solution. Another participant cautioned that policing without local knowledge could backfire, as *"you take out the non-violent drug dealers that are local and know the community and then violent drug dealers come in and take their place."* Questions were also raised about priorities, with frustration that energy is directed at minor

offences rather than the safety concerns residents live with daily. While participants agreed police have a duty to protect, many stressed they cannot be present at all times, meaning vigilance and community-led responses are essential. Also, the type of resources needed are not always in the realm of policing, but instead more social workers, housing officers, and other social support was suggested as a deterrence from more police presence.

Responsibility within the community itself came up through the discussion as a recurring theme at this stage. *"We need to have more responsibility over what's going on in our community and have more input,"* one participant said. Strengthening local connections was seen as key to preventing isolation and offering positive alternatives to gangs, as one participant highlighted that it often fills the gap where community bonds are missing, acting as a community and support system to those who are isolated. Forums like this Speak Up! Circle were valued as spaces that could channel local voices into action, *"these mechanisms can allow for what we say to go somewhere and make a change."* The discussion on solutions was summed with a call for balance, accountability, and visibility from authorities and social support mechanisms, but also a space for the community to step forward and shape its own safety.

4.2.4. RJ4All: Organisational input on community safety

The circle was rounded up with a final mount back to practical outcomes in relation to the organisation, RJ4All itself, and any actions they could consider as facilitators of this discussion and creators of this particular space. Especially raised as important to note coming into the final cycle of the project's third year, the facilitator guided the conversation to **how RJ4All could support community safety.** One participant brought to the front a continuation of *"what we're doing here today"*, noting how a community will come together often in small and fragmented ways to discuss these issues, with friends or family, in a pub or cafe, but *"what we're doing here today is different, its intentional, there's structure and a mechanism to bring it forward into action."* That an intentional coming together of people to not only discuss issues but to amount to solutions, is a

purposeful act that differs it from other mechanisms. Another participant echoed this view that community forums were needed as an intentional space, and to even bring it to another level, where a discussion revolves around a very specific topic, with information beforehand provided and people join ready with solutions, alongside concrete action and roles established within the community itself through the circle. Another voice fronted a similar idea, that this kind of *"space or forum is somehow replicated or open-up more to the public or a different space so it can be seen by someone else."*

The discussion also included the concern that forums or space must be followed by action, otherwise there is not seen to be a point, or it can feel to be redundant if there is no consequential impact, as one participant noted to *"make sure there are actions and follow-ups to make sure that it isn't just talking for no reason, that there are actions that come out of these conversations."* An important interjection was that the importance of these spaces and productiveness of them are reflective of how they are then engaged with and valued.

Other points emerging from the discussion were that groups should be funded to look into specialised issues to this area with people that know the community and can call for recommendations.

Participants also pointed to the need for more activities for youth for example, to keep them engaged and act as a safe space for them to go, as a deterrence to joining gangs or other anti-social behaviour. The importance of having other options for people was expressed as detrimental in the discussion, which has been a common theme throughout our Speak Up! Impact Reports.

5. Discussion

5.1. Quantitative Data Analysis

In this section, we will analyse the demographic data collected during the Speak Up! Circle. This is to provide context and insight into the findings, and to acknowledge any possible effects these demographics may have had on the outcomes. This analysis is not intended as a demographic representation of the wider population of SE16, nor as an attempt to generalise the conclusions to the community as a whole, but rather as a way to situate and better understand the voices that were present in this circle. In particular, we recognise that the views expressed in the Speak Up! Circle should not be assumed to represent the perspectives of entire demographic groups. The purpose of this section is therefore only to situate the discussion within its specific sample, enhancing transparency.

5.1.1. Gender demographics

This focus group included a notable imbalance in gender distribution, with more women's voices. When noting the analysis, we should consider this disparity, with also some context that those identifying as women in the group also spoke of concerns on behalf of men, one female participant noting the disparity in particularly young, black men in London being vulnerable to acts of violence. When finalising the list of recommendations, it will be essential to consider both genders' preferences and seek their opinions.

5.1.2. Postcode demographics

The postcode demographic was strongly representative of SE16, with some neighbouring areas represented. This is a strong indication of the event being community focused, drawing in the voices of those who live in the area and use our services. When taking recommendations into consideration this should be noted. This also is representative of this forum being more

populated with community members, rather than stakeholders who tend to live in more dispersed areas, even if interacting directly with SE16.

5.1.3. Ethnicity demographics

Ethnicity was relatively evenly represented in the circle, with no particular ethnic background being notably in the majority. This is a non-random sample of population, and it should be taken into consideration that it may not be matched to the representativeness of the community.

5.1.4. Age demographics

A particularly rare occurrence in comparison to previous forums and data collected is to have even representatives from most age groups, which provides a good overview of the community as a whole. However, it is important to note that particular age demographics could vary the results greatly, such as safety concerns for elderly or an older representation would diverge the results, which is something to consider for recommendations on future results.

5.2. Qualitative data analysis

This section will analyse different perspectives, comparing participants' accounts and opinions on community safety in the community. This report also aims to identify commonalities and themes, highlighting similarities in concerns raised in previous Speak Up! Circles and their relation to the project aims. This analysis is made with the intended purpose of comparing and continuing the relevance of the Restorative Justice Postcode Project with the voice of the community. Also to ensure the integrity of the format, the perspectives contributed through this format will be valued by being consolidated, analysed, and reported as recommendations. This analysis is divided into four parts, considering the main emerging themes:

- ***Interrelation of Isolation and Insecurity***

A key theme that emerged was that insecurity often stemmed less from the crimes themselves and more from the isolation of not knowing where to turn for support. Participants shared that issues which might be resolved with timely social support, such as neighbour disputes, were instead escalating into mental health crises because people felt trapped without options. This reflects findings from previous reports that highlighted mental health as a continuing and significant challenge within the community and underlines the importance of accessible spaces that offer both support and connection.

The idea of safe spaces was mentioned repeatedly. For some, this reflected spaces such as the Community Centre; for others, the youth clubs where their children attended. Participants emphasised the importance of trust of the people working there. Trust in these spaces was seen as cumulative and relational, built over time through cross-service engagement, whether through wellbeing services, the community fridge, or the warm hub. These touchpoints fostered familiarity, making residents more likely to view the Centre as a safe and supportive environment for themselves and their families.

The circle itself also acted as a safe space, offering participants the chance to come together, share concerns, and realise they were not alone in their insecurities. While many emphasised the need for concrete action beyond discussion, the act of gathering and speaking openly was itself meaningful, reinforcing connections, and reducing the sense of isolation.

- ***Visibility of Community Resources***

The importance of resource visibility was a recurring theme in the discussion. Participants emphasised that while community resources to ensure safety, such as social workers, housing officers, third-sector organisations etc. may exist, they are often underutilised or unknown to the

people who need them most. This speaks to the value of a connected network of stakeholders, where cross-referrals and collaboration can direct individuals to the organisations best placed to support them. This is attempted through our Postcode Project, connecting stakeholders with the community and increasing visibility.

The conversation also underscored the significance of physical presence and accessible spaces. Participants highlighted that reliance on digital services can be a barrier for many, reflecting feedback from our Digital Drop-In service at RJ4All, which seeks to address these challenges through a wrap-around support model. Visibility was seen as extending beyond police presence to include social services and community organisations, ensuring that support is both seen and accessible at the point of need. The visibility of resources or lack thereof was also understood to be a direct impact of cuts in funding.

- ***Embedded Resources with Local Knowledge***

The Speak Up! Circle also brought to light, as an addition to visibility or knowledge of what resources are out there, that the resources have a very specific need of being in-person support to allow the people and organisations, governmental or not, to have a connection and therefore understanding of the needs in a community. An apparent barrier that was reflected on was online resources or external support with no local knowledge of issues. A pillar stone of the restorative justice principles we advocate for is the creation of understanding through dialogue, an active practice, that requires presence. The circle reflected the ideas that previous impact reports have highlighted concerning the physical space of the Community Centre and its relevance to the project, which is integral to keeping it connected to the community living there.

Previous reports have reflected on the essential element of keeping the circle in the space of the Community Centre to keep it connected to its service users. Although this remains relevant, we will also note the recommendations and enthusiasm from this circle to have the format replicated

in different formats. This could potentially allow the model in itself to be opened up to utilisation within various spaces with specific stakeholders, to achieve some of the outcomes suggested as solutions.

- ***Sustaining Long-Term Community Relationships and Investment***

Alongside calls for greater visibility of community resources, participants stressed the need for sustained investment and long-term relationship building. The SE16 Postcode Project and RJ4All's mission are aligned with building sustaining relations with the local community. Quick fixes were noted as ineffective, echoing findings from previous reports that short-term interventions fail to build trust or create lasting change. Instead, participants emphasised the importance of ongoing funding, commitment, and continuity, enabling projects to gain traction and strengthen community trust over time.

This perspective directly reinforces the aims of the Postcode Project, which seeks to embed itself in the community through consistent presence and relationship building. Participants highlighted that continuity is essential not only for effective service delivery but also for fostering the kind of deep connections that make communities feel supported and resilient. The circle echoed needs of long-term relationship building both within the community and with local authorities and representatives.

- ***Community Responsibility***

Another central theme was the importance of community responsibility, ensuring that residents have the opportunity, resources, and space to take accountability for their own safety and to play an active role in creating solutions (Dzur & Olson, 2004). This was linked to the wider event of the day, which included activities focused on community bonding and connection, reinforcing the value of knowing and engaging with one another as a foundation for safety.

Participants highlighted that validating community input is a crucial first step. Taking recommendations seriously, while also equipping residents with the tools and spaces to address issues themselves, was seen as a pathway to empowerment. It was expressed that community ownership and empowerment is an important aim that is integral to supporting a restorative justice ethos. Rather than relying solely on external solutions, which risk undermining ownership, the emphasis was on supporting communities to generate and lead their own responses, reflecting and encouraging the user-led approach of the Postcode Project. This approach ensures accountability while strengthening trust and resilience from within.

- ***'Third Spaces': Need of Safe Community Spaces and Providing Alternatives***

The discussion highlighted the importance of physical spaces that provide security, safety, and an alternative place of belonging. Participants emphasised the value of what can be understood as a "third space", social environments distinct from both home (the first space) and work or school (the second space), which foster connection, belonging, and community interaction (Hickman, 2013). These spaces allow community members to meet, cross paths, and interact in ways they might not otherwise. When activities and opportunities are available in such spaces, they create meaningful alternatives for both children and adults. As one parent noted during the circle, these spaces offer "something else for them to do," providing positive options and a sense of inclusion.

The Speak Up! Circle itself was recognised as a model of this idea. The use of a peace circle format not only created a safe and respectful space for dialogue but also raised the possibility of replicating this model in other contexts. Regular service users were already familiar with this way of working and expressed finding value in it, suggesting that it has become part of good practice within the community. The integration of restorative justice into everyday practice being important (Gavrielides, 2020b), building knowledge and comfort with such practices strengthens their potential impact.

At the same time, participants voiced the need for a wider reach and stronger follow-through. While the community space itself was valued, criticism arose around ensuring that these conversations lead to tangible outcomes. The report and its recommendations therefore play a crucial role in extending the reach of these spaces and ensuring that the community's voice translates into action.

5.3. Link with the Year 1 and Year 2 RJ4All work

As we noted in previous reports, our findings from 2023 and 2024 highlighted a need to improve community cohesion and empowerment, build trust, and addressed feelings of insecurity, needs for increased services, and collaboration with other local organisations.

This report is a continuation of the learning and development that has taken place alongside our community through the findings of 2023 and 2024 as part of this project. This year's findings reflect our commitment to a user-led approach, building on the knowledge already gathered about our SE16 community.

During our last Speak Up! Circle, the focus was specifically on youth and youth empowerment. That report highlighted how youth engagement can counter damaging perceptions of young people, perceptions often shaped by rising hostility and criminalisation, fuelled by misinformation. To address this, the previous Speak Up! Circle invited young people exclusively to take the lead, extending the work of our Youth-led Project FRED campaign run by the Youth Management Board. This format has been broadened this time to include the community as a whole again, with a similar goal of changing the narrative of SE16. This year's September Speak Up! Circle focused on how community safety is enacted and strengthened by residents themselves.

Unlike some earlier events, this Speak Up! Circle had a broader demographic representation—parents, young people, elderly, and other community members, outnumbering stakeholders or authorities. This shift allowed the circle to highlight not only the real concerns of safety but also to

counter the narrative that SE16 is simply “unsafe.” Instead, it revealed how many residents are actively engaged, willing to show up, and committed to building safer spaces together. Much like our youth-focused circle challenged the narrative of youth recidivism, this particular forum challenged deficit-focused views of the wider community.

These findings also link to the February Speak Up! Circle earlier this year, where issues of democratic trust and low involvement were raised. Ownership and empowerment emerged as key, with participants stressing the need for representatives to listen more closely and for future Speak Up! Circles to achieve stronger engagement from local authorities as well.

Overall, the themes raised in Year 3 are a direct continuation of the concerns identified in Years 1 and 2. Early findings pointed to the need to reframe community narratives towards empowerment, and we have seen that residents not only want to be involved but are eager to contribute to positive change. This year’s forum represents another step in creating the space for them to do so.

Our community centre continues to serve as a recognised safe space, anchoring this work. Activities such as the Speak Up! Circles rely on that sense of comfort and trust to bring local people together to discuss issues that directly affect them. These sessions create opportunities to share experiences, express concerns, and propose solutions. Without this safe foundation, our broader goal of fostering community cohesion and empowerment would not be possible.

6. Critical Conclusion

This impact report is a measure of the needs and relationship building done with local service users and stakeholders within the exposure and influence of the Postcode Project. Community safety being a source of concern, in this context, it is more so treated in which ways community safety is enabled and how that can be strengthened.

This impact report is not only on the recommendations and content that resulted from the Speak Up! Circle but also about the format itself. It is used as an act of enabling social community cohesion and a bringing together of the resources within a community to foster an environment of self-sustainment and support within the community itself.

It also gives legitimacy to the voice of the community, and we wish to honour that with valuing their recommendations.

7. Recommendations

Following our discussion with the participants, recommendations were raised for the RJ4All team, Steering Group members, and external stakeholders:

- **Increased visibility/accessibility to authorities** – In-person support was fronted as important for the community, to have in-person representatives/authorities or third-sector workers with strong relational ties to the community was seen as essential to address issues around community safety. We strive to encourage this through our continued work connecting the community to its stakeholders and through our physical space in SE16 through our RJ4All Rotherhithe Community Centre.
- **Increased long-term social supports** – The need for support and community relations with strong and long-lasting relational ties to the community in different formats than authorities, such as housing officers, social workers, mentors, etc. was strongly highlighted. RJ4All will continue building capacity through the Postcode Project and beyond, via long-term and sustainable funding.
- **Community Accountability Mechanisms –** Emphasis was placed on the accountability of both the community and the authorities responsible for safety, and on their respective roles in addressing safety concerns within the community. In addition, a need for increased transparency and information on responsibility was expressed. This will continue to be emphasised through Speak Up! Circles, giving space and purpose for

community stakeholders to gather on issues. It also encourages a forwarding of our mentoring, volunteering, and internship programmes, that creates channels and trains community members to support themselves.

- **Community Spaces** – The need for funding of community spaces that create a safe environment and another option for people to partake in that can deter from anti-social or criminal behaviour. The need for alternative provisions and outlets, particularly for young people, leads us to take into consideration for our development of Youth Services Framework and incorporation of Sports, Art and Workshops through our evidence-based RJiNEAR model used as a guide to reestablish our restorative justice work related to youth.
- **Community forums** – The continuation of Speak Up! Circles has been encouraged by the outcomes of the group. Training in restorative justice dialogue and circle keeping for local authorities, organisations, and representatives is advanced as a recommendation to aid this process. Actionable forums that bring together the voices of the community on a particular issue, and that is replicable and listened to by relevant authorities and representatives was expressed as a priority. As highlighted at the beginning of the report, this particular event realised this expectation and provided a space for community members to interact with the local MP, Neil Coyle, beyond their participation in circle discussions. He listened and responded to the questions and concerns of the community members and ensured more police and SNT presence to address safety concerns. As a response and in line with RJ4All's mission and project aims, Theo Gavrielides, Founder and Director of RJ4All, recommended and offered delivering trainings to local police and SNTs on restorative justice practices and principles.

8. Acknowledgment

Rotherhithe Consolidated Charities supports RJ4All's restorative justice circles and Speak Up Community Circles and is a member of the Restorative Justice Postcode Steering Group. Website address: www.rotherhithecc.co.uk

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