



Building the World's First Restorative Justice Postcode: First Quarterly Impact Report

Charlie Mlcek, Carmen Costa, and Dr. Theo Gavrielides

Restorative Justice for All

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Abstract

Purpose

This research paper serves to inform: 1) the RJ4All steering group, 2) further project development and adjustment, and 3) other stakeholders as a communication strategy.

Methodology

In March 2023, RJ4All held a Speak Up! event to gather input from community members using the research medium of a focus group. What is their vision for their community? The event served dual purposes, providing insight to the RJ4All team yet simultaneously contributing to Southwark 2030's larger conversation initiative.

Findings

From the discussion groups, we found that demographically speaking, attendees represented Southwark community members relatively accurately—though improvements in inclusion (especially regarding ethnicity) could be made in future groups. Our research suggests a need for enhanced access and support for community networks, increased marketing and outreach, coordinated responses to crime, improved communication on crime-fighting efforts, long-term and flexible funding, more developer accountability, better communication on key social issues, and regular community forums.

Originality

This report details the results of the inaugural Speak Up! Restorative Justice Community Forum. The following outcomes contribute to RJ4All's unique mission of establishing the first Restorative Justice Postcode. In the future, we recommend additional Speak Up! discussion groups to better inform stakeholder decision-making.

Research Limitations

The following findings came from a non-randomly selected focus group of 29 individuals.

We acknowledge that this small sample size likely does not accurately reflect the desires of the entire Southwark community, so the following recommendations should be taken hesitantly.

Keywords: restorative justice, restorative justice postcode, peace circles, accountability, apprenticeship

1. Introduction

At RJ4All, we have evidence to believe that restorative justice can be a powerful approach that addresses poverty and power imbalances, promotes community cohesion, and fosters equality and respect in society. It holds the potential to transform how society addresses conflicts and harm, shifting the focus from punitive measures to collaborative dialogue and shared decision-making. Since our inception 10 years ago, we have been taking bold steps towards realising the vision of a restorative justice postcode, starting with the vibrant neighbourhood of SE16 in South East London. More recently and following the opening of the RJ4All Community Centre, this programme was supported through a scientific research [project](#). This pioneering initiative seeks to disperse power equitably among key stakeholders, including the community, local government, voluntary organisations, private entities, and public institutions. By incorporating restorative justice values into their day-to-day practices, the restorative justice postcode aims to create a more inclusive and participatory environment where dialogue and preventive measures guided by shared decision-making resolve community tensions.

RJ4All's journey towards building the world's first restorative justice postcode has been years in the making, driven by a deep commitment to combating power abuse, reducing inequalities, and strengthening the social contract between communities and governments.

To realise our vision, RJ4All has embarked on a multi-faceted approach. Firstly, we have transformed the RJ4All Rotherhithe Community Centre into a vibrant hub, serving as a holistic solution to address local inequalities, community tensions, anti-social behaviour, and poverty. By providing a range of free services, including a food bank, community gym, library, youth clubs, workshops, internships, mental health clinics, and conflict resolution practices, RJ4All aims to uplift the community and create a safe and inclusive space for all.

Through extensive community engagement and collaboration, RJ4All has garnered the support of key decision-makers and organisations. Subsequently, we have established a steering group composed of key decision-makers, such as local businesses, the council, youth offending services, voluntary organisations, restorative justice practitioners, and educational institutions. This collaborative effort ensures that the restorative justice postcode is integrated into wider community development and addresses the needs and aspirations of the residents. A key output of the Steering Group will be the production and signing of a Restorative Justice Postcode Memorandum of Understanding. This collective agreement ensures that the principles of restorative justice are embedded in the fabric of the community, enabling individuals to experience a more egalitarian distribution of power and fostering a sense of inclusion and agency in decision-making processes that affect their lives.

The following sections contain information on findings (both qualitative and quantitative) from the focus group, contextualising them in the larger picture of RJ4All and our mission to build the world's first restorative justice postcode. We then offer recommendations for internal and external stakeholders moving forward, with a section dedicated to advising the steering group.

2. Methodology

1.1 Participants

When registering for the event, most attendees filled out an online Google Form with a series of questions—asking information about gender identity, race, and postcode. Sixteen of the 29 attendees registered via this format. We use those responses to obtain demographic information about attendees and extrapolate conclusions and recommendations from that data. Participants received no financial compensation for their involvement, though complementary refreshments, food, and stationery were offered. As a requirement for

participation, attendees resided in the Southwark borough of London. All those present took part in the discussion group, and they joined on a voluntary basis.

1.2 Materials

1.2.1 Speak Up! Restorative Justice Community Forums

Held on a quarterly basis, local stakeholders gather for Speak Up! Restorative Justice Community Forums as a means to ensure that local perspectives are acknowledged, empowered, and included in decision-making processes that directly affect them. The forums occur in RJ4All's SE16 Community Centre. The Speak Up! events enact RJ4All's principles of eradicating greed and distributing power in a more equitable manner. Rebuilding trust and fostering resilient communities cannot be achieved through quick fixes, but rather require long-term aspirations that necessitate community participation and power-sharing through dialogue; this is precisely what the Speak Up! events aim to achieve. Guided by our core values of power-sharing, equality, and respect, these events are chaired by Dr. Theo Gavrielides (Founder and Director of RJ4All). The Speak Up! event held on March 21st, 2023, marked the first Speak Up! event of many to come (RJ4All, 2023b).

Additionally, the Speak Up! events contribute to the Southwark 2030 project, launched by the borough council. The project complements RJ4All's vision by providing a framework for shared ambitions and aspirations for the borough. Recognising Southwark's existing contrasts and inequalities, the project seeks to harness the collective strength of local residents, community groups, businesses, and public services to address pressing issues, enhance the quality of life, and prepare for future challenges. As a component of their 2030 initiative, Southwark Council spearheaded a series of conversations to engage community members. Speak Up! events like the one held on March 21st contribute to these conversations (Palmer, 2023).

1.2.2 Peace Circles

Peace circles are a research tool for discussion. A methodology used to foster relationship building and conflict resolution, the circle enables others to speak their truths and perspectives. Within the circle, all are equal; they follow a “power with” as opposed to a “power over” style. As a part of the peace circle, a talking piece makes it around the group, establishing a talking circle. When somebody holds the talking piece, it is their turn to talk. Additionally, a keeper of the circle ensures members follow the peace circle rules (United Nations, 2016). This method reinforces RJ4All principles of power sharing and equity.

1.2.3 WEMWBS

Although not mentioned in the following findings, RJ4All uses the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scales (WEMWBS) which assess individuals' mental well-being before and after their involvement with the restorative justice postcode project. By employing a validated measurement tool, RJ4All can quantify changes in mental health outcomes within the community (RJ4All, 2023a).

1.3 Procedure

For the focus group, the keeper of the circle, Dr. Theo Gavrielides, opened the conversation by adapting the peace circle concept. Theo utilised a talking piece (a small flute) to establish the talking circle. He stated the rules of the peace circle. Participants then went around and shared their hopes and fears for Southwark in 2030. Additionally, in alignment with the peace circle strategy, Theo closed the event by thanking the group for their participation and informing the participants of next steps including formulating an Open Letter to Southwark Council based on the discussions which took place in the circle. After being shown a brief video explaining the mission of RJ4All, community members sat around a discussion circle and shared their feedback regarding the proposed questions. Georgina

Turner and Carmen Costa took minutes of the meeting which were later analysed to collect data.

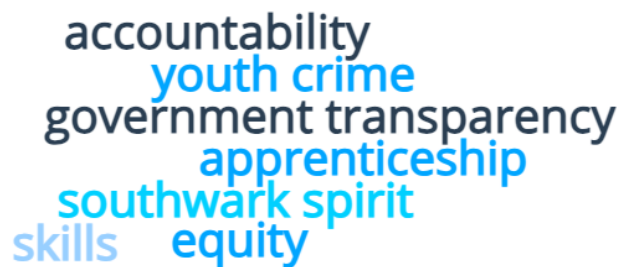
3. Results

3.1 Qualitative Data Display

This section provides a presentation of the focus group findings, drawing out the main qualitative discussion points. The qualitative data below references the group conversation from the Speak Up! event on March 21st.

Figure 1

Visual Word Map with Frequent Participant Hopes and Fears for Southwark 2030



3.1.1 Main Hopes for 2030

3.1.1.1 Strengthened Community Relations. Foster stronger relationships among community members, including various ethnic groups, especially newly arrived residents. Additionally, community members expressed a desire for improved stakeholder collaboration, such as council members, the police force, construction companies, and corporate organisations. There was a general consensus that Southwark should be retaining its lively and welcoming community spirit as the borough undergoes large-scale developments and changes.

3.1.1.2 Increased Transparency and Accountability. Enhance transparency and accountability between different groups, particularly the police force and Southwark Council.

This includes promoting open communication, sharing information, and ensuring all stakeholders are responsible for their actions.

3.1.1.3 Equal Access to Community Space. Provide equal access and usage of community space for the community's interest, prioritising community needs over commercial interests. Participants highlighted the urgency of equitable spaces amidst the growing number of construction projects in the area.

3.1.1.4 Equal Access to Funding and Support. Ensure equal funding and support for community initiatives. It also involves raising awareness among community members about the opportunities available to them.

3.1.1.5 Increased Access to Legal Support for Disabled Residents. Improve access to legal support for disabled residents and raise awareness about available services.

3.1.1.6 Increased Empathy and Understanding. Promote empathy and understanding across different Southwark areas and among various community groups. Representation and meeting the diverse needs of all groups are important.

3.1.1.7 Increased Possibilities for Activities and Volunteering. Create more activities and volunteering opportunities catering to younger and older generations. This includes harnessing the existing skills and resources of Southwark communities. It also promotes intergenerational collaboration.

3.1.1.8 More Activities for Teenagers. Provide more affordable activities for teenagers and strengthen engagement with young people in the community. Whether related to personal or early professional development, participants rallied around increasing the spectrum of opportunities for youth.

3.1.1.9 Reduction in Youth and Petty Crime. Address youth and petty crime issues by implementing effective measures and interventions.

3.1.1.10 Council's Attention to Key Social Issues. The council should pay attention to key social issues, including housing, opportunities and engagement with young people, responding to petty crime, and mental health.

3.1.1.11 Improved Infrastructure. Enhance the maintenance of pavements, especially considering the needs of residents who use mobility scooters and may have to use busy roads as an alternative.

3.1.2 Main Fears for 2030

3.1.2.1 Existing Dissonance among Community Groups. The presence of divisions, including differences in the length of time residents have lived in the borough, poses a challenge to community cohesion.

3.1.2.2 Disinterest of Corporate Organisations. Despite lacking direct involvement, corporate organisations may dismiss community tensions, which undermines the genuine community spirit and can be insulting and demoralising.

3.1.2.3 Active Exclusion of the Community. The community may face exclusion from discussions, decisions, and spaces, particularly by developers.

3.1.2.3 Restricted Funding for Community Groups. Community groups may receive limited funding. Participants also fear overly data-driven short-term projects that subvert community needs and pose a risk to sustainable community initiatives.

3.2 Quantitative Data Display

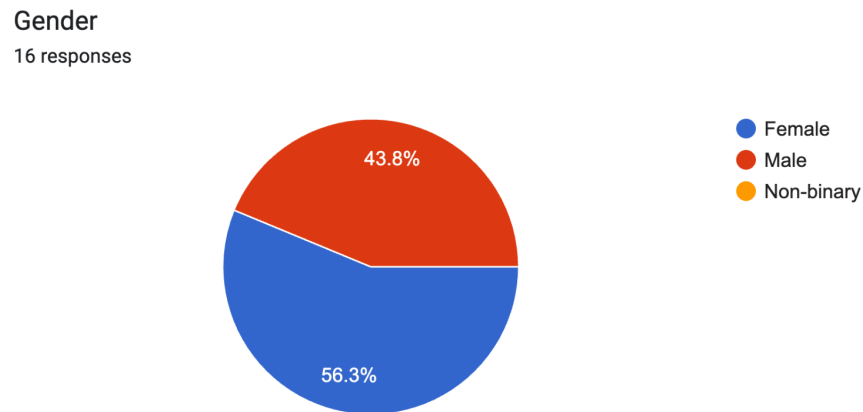
The sections below contain quantitative data about the gender, ethnicity, and geographics of attendees, as well as recurrent themes at the event. While the event had 29 community members in attendance, we recorded the demographics of 16 participants.

3.2.1 Gender Demographics

Nine of the 16 participants were female, and 7 were male.

Figure 2

Chart Displaying Attendee Gender Identity



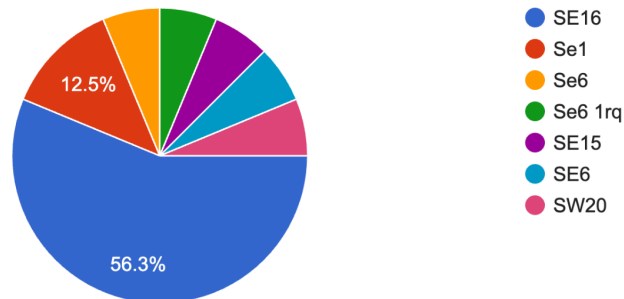
3.2.2 Postcode Demographics

Of the attendees, over half were from the SE16 postcode. Members from the SE1, SE6, SE15, and SW20 postcodes were also present. So far, the Southwark 2030 Conversation project has collected over 1200 surveys, had over 800 people join one of 38 listening events, and had 262 people join the 2030 Conversations. The 29 attendees present at this event contributed to that 262 figure (Southwark 2030, 2023).

Figure 3

Chart Displaying Attendee Postcode

Postcode
16 responses



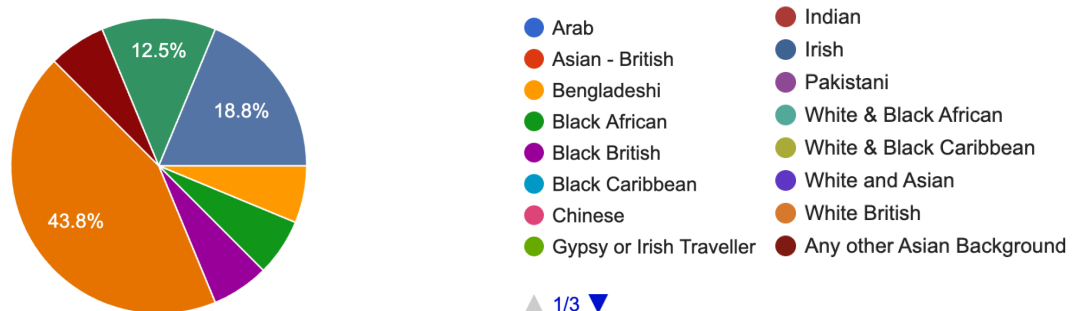
3.2.3 Ethnicity Demographics

Around 63% of attendees present identified as white, 12% higher than the Southwark community's demographics; conversely, 12.6% of recorded participants identified as black compared to Southwark's 25% black-identifying population (Office for National Statistics, 2023).

Figure 4

Chart Displaying Attendee Ethnic Identity

Ethnicity
16 responses



3.2.4 Discussion Point Frequency

In analysing the minutes from the discussion circle, certain themes and phrases arose multiple times. Below, we have quantified all repeat themes with the number of times community members mentioned them:

- transparency and accountability in government **(3 times)**
- jobs and apprenticeships for young people; an emphasis on their future **(3 times)**
- maintaining Southwark Borough's lively community spirit **(2 times)**
- channelling community members' skills and strengths into productive avenues **(2 times)**
- reduction of crime—especially youth crime **(2 times)**

4. Discussion

This section offers a deeper analysis of the topics raised during the focus group and the backgrounds of participants in attendance, including implications for shared community decision-making and RJ4All's project to make SE16 a restorative justice postcode.

4.1 Qualitative Data Analysis

A more in-depth analysis of the qualitative data produced from the focus group reveals that many of the participants' hopes and fears are addressed through the restorative justice approach and postcode project at RJ4All in SE16. Their reflections mirror the significant outcomes already generated by the restorative postcode project in terms of community engagement, power dissemination, community cohesion, and addressing social inequalities.

4.1.1 Community Empowerment and Collaboration

In the peace circle, one service user mentioned making the neighbourhood a more equal place and government accountability. The restorative justice postcode project has successfully empowered the local community by disseminating power equally among key

stakeholders. The active participation and engagement of community members have resulted in a sense of ownership and inclusion. This empowerment has fostered more robust relationships and collaboration among various stakeholders, leading to effective decision-making processes. RJ4All should continue to prioritise community empowerment and engagement, ensuring that community members' voices are heard and valued.

4.1.2 Positive Impact on Community Cohesion

Themes of community cohesion and trust pervaded the discussion groups. One resident, for example, called this the best place in London they've lived—largely due to its community spirit. The restorative justice values and practices implemented within the project have significantly contributed to improved community cohesion. The shift from adversarial approaches to restorative justice dialogues has allowed for meaningful engagement and collaboration in resolving conflicts and addressing harm. This has led to stronger social bonds, increased trust, and a sense of shared responsibility among community members.

4.1.3 Holistic Approach to Addressing Inequalities

Throughout the Speak Up! session, residents mentioned community support as a tenet of community engagement. Providing a holistic range of free services has played a vital role in addressing the community's inequalities and social cohesion issues. The availability of resources such as the food bank, mental health clinic, educational opportunities, and conflict resolution practices has positively impacted community members' well-being and quality of life. This comprehensive approach has helped alleviate poverty, promote social integration, and support those in need.

4.1.4 Long-Term Funding and Sustainability

Perhaps the most common theme from the discussion: youth investment. Achieving such a goal, however, implies a forward-facing approach. To ensure the long-term success

and sustainability of the restorative justice postcode project, securing adequate and flexible funding is essential. RJ4All should continue exploring diverse funding sources, like grants, partnerships, and community fundraising efforts to support the ongoing implementation of initiatives and services.

4.2 Quantitative Data Analysis

This section expands upon the quantitative data and figures provided early. Despite the small sample size, the group seemed to represent the Southwark neighbourhood relatively accurately—though some groups are underrepresented. Other data points from stakeholder opinion inform which items the steering group should prioritise.

4.2.1 Gender Demographics

We see the near-equal gender distribution as a positive; with power sharing as a key component of our mission, we do not want one gender to dominate the conversation. In future sessions, however, we would like to see increased representation from gender-nonconforming groups.

4.2.2 Postcode Demographics

Because RJ4All aims to build the world's first restorative justice postcode, having a majority of attendees from SE16 not only makes sense, it demonstrates that we have made progress towards our mission. The presence of attendees from other postcodes likely involves the event advancing Southwark 2030 Conversations—a project encompassing the entirety of the Southwark borough.

4.2.3 Ethnic Demographics

Due to the small sample size, we recognise that these findings should be reported with discretion. Nevertheless, they indicate that increasing emphasis on inclusion at subsequent

Speak Up! events may ensure that future results more accurately reflect our community's composition.

4.2.4 Discussion Point Frequency

Once again, the sample size is relatively small. Nonetheless, the repeat nature of some of these concepts (especially those with 3 repeat mentions) means they may be more important to community members. Additionally, due to the peace circle format, members only spoke one at a time. They could not simply shout, "I agree" after a point was made; instead, participants waited their turn to speak, so recurring concepts held even more gravity.

Regarding the first item (transparency and accountability in government), RJ4All aspires to return power to community members; when community members gain more power in decision-making, the government must become more accountable. In that way, we hope to address the first item. We recommend that stakeholders and the RJ4All steering group seriously consider how else we can better achieve the second item (providing a future for young people).

4.3 Recommendations from Speak Up! Participants

After expressing their hopes and fears for Southwark 2030 in the discussion circle, participants engaged in a more group-style discussion around possible avenues for actioning these aspirations and overcoming identified obstacles.

4.3.1 Enhanced Access and Support for Community Networks

Corporate organisations should provide resources and support for community networks, including owning and funding community spaces.

4.3.2 Increased Marketing and Outreach

Efforts should be made to raise awareness among eligible residents about available funding and support, with a particular focus on health-related services.

4.3.3 Coordinated Response to Crime

The police force and Southwark Council should work together to develop a coordinated response to crime. Residents also request an explanation for the lack of foot patrols by police staff.

4.3.4 Improved Communication on Crime-Fighting Efforts

Community-facing communication should be increased to inform residents about the actions taken to combat petty crime.

4.3.5 Long-Term and Flexible Funding

More long-term and flexible funding opportunities should be provided to support successful and sustainable community initiatives.

4.3.6 Holding Developers Accountable

Developers should be held accountable for not meeting their commitments, and their shortcomings should be publicised.

4.3.7 Enhanced Communication on Key Social Issues

The council should improve marketing and communication efforts regarding key social issues such as housing, opportunities and engagement with young people, responding to petty crime, and mental health.

4.3.8 Regular Community Forums

Regular community forums should be organised to increase participation, reflection, and mutual support among residents.

4.4 Other Recommendations

Based on the continued development and analysis of data, we will draw additional recommendations for RJ4All, the steering group, and external stakeholders.

4.4.1 Recommendation for Community Empowerment and Collaboration

RJ4All should maintain regular communication channels with the local community, ensuring transparency and inclusivity in decision-making processes. This can be achieved through ongoing community consultations, forums, and open dialogues to address concerns, gather feedback, and incorporate community perspectives into the project's development. One service user even directly mentioned making Speak Up! meetings regular events as a way to promote community empowerment, a notion we also support.

4.4.2 Recommendation for Positive Impact on Community Cohesion

To further uplift community trust, RJ4All and the steering group should continue prioritising the implementation of restorative justice approaches within the community. We recommend expanded efforts to implement restorative justice practices in schools, workplaces, and other community settings to further enhance community cohesion and conflict resolution. Furthermore, we recommend that RJ4All actively seeks additional partnerships with local businesses, educational institutions, and voluntary organisations to strengthen the range of services and support available to the community. This collaborative approach will ensure a comprehensive and sustainable response to addressing inequalities.

4.4.3 Recommendation for Holistic Approach to Addressing Inequalities

RJ4All, in collaboration with the steering group and external stakeholders, should continue expanding and refining the range of services offered to address the community's specific needs. Regular evaluation and feedback from community members will enable continuous improvement and adaptation to emerging challenges.

4.4.4 Recommendation for Long-Term Funding and Sustainability

If we want to see long-term impacts, RJ4All should proceed with a dedicated funding strategy and actively seek funding opportunities to sustain the project's operations and expansion. This strategy may involve building relationships with funders, conducting

fundraising campaigns, and exploring innovative funding models. By securing long-term funding, RJ4All can broaden its youth support programs—fulfilling the request of many Speak Up! participants.

4.5 Concluding Thoughts

RJ4All's restorative justice postcode project in SE16 has made significant strides in empowering the local community, promoting cohesion, and addressing social inequalities, but it has only just begun. The March Speak Up! discussion group is just one of many to come. So far, the project has fostered a sense of ownership, inclusion, and shared decision-making among community members through community engagement, power dissemination, and implementation of restorative justice values and practices.

The findings from the Speak Up! event—the first of our discussion groups—and the analysis of qualitative and quantitative data highlight the main hopes and obstacles for 2030 as identified by community members. Strengthened community relations, increased transparency and accountability, equal access to community space and funding, expanded opportunities for young people, and increased empathy and understanding were among the main hopes expressed by the community. Obstacles to overcome include existing dissonance among community groups, disinterest from corporate organisations, and active exclusion of the community.

We have drawn several critical conclusions and recommendations from these findings. RJ4All should prioritise community empowerment and collaboration, maintaining regular communication channels and ensuring transparency and inclusivity in decision-making processes. The positive impact on community cohesion calls for the continued implementation of restorative justice approaches and the expansion of restorative practices in various community settings.

The holistic approach to addressing inequalities through free services has proven effective, and RJ4All should continue expanding and refining the range of services offered based on the community's specific needs. Long-term funding and sustainability are crucial, and RJ4All should pursue a dedicated funding strategy, exploring diverse funding sources to support the ongoing operations and expansion of the project.

Overall, the restorative justice postcode project has thus far demonstrated the potential for restorative justice to transform communities, empower individuals, and create a more inclusive and equitable society. By prioritising community engagement, collaboration, and holistic approaches, RJ4All and its partners can make further progress in realising the vision of a restorative justice postcode and contribute to the broader development goals of the Southwark borough. Through sustained efforts and ongoing evaluation, the project can serve as a model for restorative justice initiatives and inspire positive change in communities worldwide.

5. Annexe

Table 1

Requests Specifically Addressed to the Steering Group

1. Continue hosting Speak Up! events and other community forums to better inform stakeholders' desires.
2. Expand youth opportunities, such as apprenticeships and youth programs.
3. Collaborate with local law enforcement and Southwark Council to develop a coordinated response to crime informed by restorative justice principles; community-facing communication should be increased to inform residents about the actions taken to combat petty crime.
4. Cooperate with local developers to ensure accountability and community participation in planning, publicising developers' shortcomings.
5. Pursue long-term funding to enable more sustainability initiatives.
6. Promote diversity and inclusion to ensure stakeholder participation at future

community forums more accurately reflects the SE16 and Southwark demographic.
7. Keep expanding services in alignment with RJ4All’s holistic approach to restorative justice.
8. Explore other communication methods with local stakeholders to enhance transparency.

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