



November 30th, 2023

OPEN LETTER FROM A COMMUNITY CONSULTATION
HELD AT THE RESTORATIVE JUSTICE FOR ALL COMMUNITY CENTRE

Subject: **Addressing Power Abuse and Building Community Trust**

I am writing on behalf of the Southwark-based charitable institute, Restorative Justice for All (RJ4All) to share with you some current and urgent concerns that were raised by local residents of SE16 London relating to safety and power abuse. These concerns were collected as part of our scientific programme of building the world's **first restorative justice postcode (ANNEX I)**.

This letter aims to honour my commitment to those who gave evidence and use our community services to voice their concerns and ask for your attention and action as a key stakeholder with either a moral or legal duty to respond. The comprehensive findings of the Speak Up! Community Forum held on October 17th, 2023, have been shared with all event attendees. It is our unwavering commitment to maintain transparent communication and keep them informed about any new updates and developments stemming from this crucial initiative.

The background

In particular, the evidence was collected through a follow up Community Forum that held on **October 17th, 2023¹**. The community consultation forms part of our quarterly [Speak Up! Restorative Justice Community Forums](#) . These are the vehicles we use to measure the impact of our ambition to restore community tension in SE16 London. On 17th of October, through two focus groups, we explored the core issues of trust deficits within the community concerning public authorities, uncovering the root causes of harm, crime, and injustices **(ANNEX II)**.

Current and urgent concerns

Our community members voiced their concerns about **transparent governance, declining community engagement, disempowerment, barriers to engaging with authorities, information inaccessibility, safety issues, criminality, and discrimination against marginalized groups**. The recurring theme was the **disempowerment** experienced by our community, resulting from **power being concentrated in the hands of public authorities, causing fear, untrustworthiness, and disconnection**.

To address these challenges, the community expressed a need for **transparent local authorities, improved education and sports, heightened community collaboration, positive engagement,**

¹ Another community forum was held on March, 21st 2023 and the findings can be found here: <https://www.rj4all.info/speak-up-march>





SE16 2LJ

**BUILDING THE WORLD'S FIRST
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE POSTCODE**



and **recognition of contributions**. The desire for community empowerment, involvement, collaboration, and the redistribution of power equally emerged as shared goals.

The findings echo those from our [first Speak Up event in March 2023](#), emphasising the persistent issues of:

1. **community disconnection, alienation, and the need for power redistribution**. A climate of fear, untrustworthiness and disconnection is cultivated, resulting in the community missing its goal.
2. **crime, inequalities, unsafety, and disparities**
3. need for **long-term investment in community efforts, sustainable solutions, and sufficient funding** to address community needs.

Our reflections and request

At RJ4All, we aim to recognise, empower, and integrate local perspectives into decision-making processes impacting the community. Held at RJ4All's SE16 Community Centre, the Forums provide a platform for residents, councillors, and stakeholders to voice their opinions and aspirations for our community. Emphasising community engagement and individual empowerment, the Speak Up event captures, monitors, and reports on the community's concerns, needs, and visions, reflecting our core principle of inclusive community discourse and solutions. RJ4All has made it its priority to implement these events on a regular basis. The series of our Speak Up! Forums support and showcase the important mission RJ4All has embarked on to "[Build the world's first Restorative Justice Postcode](#)".

The outcomes of all the focus groups since the project's inception validate the significance of our initiatives, showcasing the positive impact on community members' everyday lives. The RJ4All Community Centre has become a haven for those seeking to regain their community sense, work on their well-being, and address issues such as poverty and powerlessness. Our comprehensive range of free services, including [Youth Clubs](#), [Well-being circles](#), a [community fridge and pantry](#), accessible sports at [RJ4All gym](#), [Warm Hub services](#), [digital inclusion sessions](#), and [Community Consultation Forums](#), addresses the identified issues and remain a proactive mechanism to support the community. However, ongoing funding is crucial for the long-term functionality of these services, which is an ongoing battle.

In the light of the discussion around these alarming harms and urgent needs in the community, the following recommendations for the RJ4All team, the steering group, and external stakeholder have been drawn.

1. **Strengthen Community Engagement and Inclusivity**
2. **Empower Youth and Address Socioeconomic Inequalities**
3. **Bridging Trust Gaps**
4. **Improve Communication and Access to Information**
5. **Equitable Access to Restorative Services**
6. **Long-term investment**





SE16 2LJ

**BUILDING THE WORLD'S FIRST
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE POSTCODE**



As representatives with the power to effect change, **we urgently call on you to heed the community's voice**. The recommendations drawn from our Speak Up Events, should pull us all together to seek potential ways and multiple angles to shape our way forward. Thanks to the SE16 Restorative Justice Postcode Programme and its several services validated by the community, RJ4All offers a tangible path towards rebuilding trust, combating inequalities, and fostering reconciliation.

We invite you to engage in a constructive dialogue with us and the SE16 community that will contribute to the collective well-being of our community and make our voice to be heard beyond the barriers of misinformation, miscommunication, trust-gaps and political imposition.

The positive affirmations above reinforce our belief that RJ4All's project is not merely a set of services but a catalyst for positive change. We implore you to consider our findings seriously, recognising the urgency of addressing power abuse and working towards a harmonious community.

We would value a meeting with you to discuss these matters further and find a potential way to collaborate and make ourselves jointly involved in our community advancement, echoing the community members' needs. We look forward to hearing from you and witnessing your enthusiasm for our community and our efforts to bring up the much-needed change.

Sincerely,
Dr. Theo Gavrielides
RJ4All Founder & Director





SE16 2LJ

**BUILDING THE WORLD'S FIRST
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE POSTCODE**



ANNEX I – Building the world’s first Restorative Justice Postcode

RJ4All is endeavouring to [build the world’s first restorative just postcode right here in SE16](#). This means we are collaborating with local stakeholders across SE16 to see restorative justice principles instilled in the local institutions and community.

Our ultimate goal is to build a restorative justice postcode that will more **equally distribute power** throughout the community and address harm through restorative practices and preventative measures. Our project and vision actively strive to bring stakeholders together, give a voice to the community, and unite everyone in SE16 behind the values and practices of restorative justice including of power-sharing, equality, dignity, respect and involvement in decision making.

To achieve this and make our vision sustainable, we are collecting data to monitor the effectiveness of our services and approach at a local level to produce high-quality research. This research could then be used to pioneer the development of future restorative justice postcodes in London and internationally through effective user-led and data-driven methods.

ANNEX II – OCTOBER SPEAK UP

Our Speak Up event on 17th October 2023 had as a starting point the existing lack of trust within the community with public authorities and the root causes of harm/crime/injustices.

Both focus group sessions were framed within the same overarching topic and driving questions. The thematic angle for both focus groups centred on addressing the core issues of trust deficits within the community with respect to public authorities, and the underlying causes of harm, crime, and injustices. This theme was closely aligned with the broader vision of the entire project, which aims to rectify power imbalances, rebuild trust, foster community cohesion, and mitigate the root causes of harm and anti-social behaviour.

To guide the discussion, two main questions presented to participants in order to keep the circles in line with the project’s goals; "What is the most significant injustice or source of harm you have encountered within our community?" and "Based on the outcome of what we discussed, what are your needs and how can the community help in this?".





SE16 2LJ

**BUILDING THE WORLD'S FIRST
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE POSTCODE**



"What is the most significant injustice or source of harm you have encountered within our community?" ("What has been the role of the authority on each occasion?" – subsidiary question)

Focus Group 1

- 1 "Inadequate Communication-Access to Information".
- 2 "Lack of Community Engagement/Involvement".
- 3 "Lack of protection on safe spaces, green spaces and playgrounds"
- 4 "Unsafety in the neighbourhood – lack of action".
- 5 "Disparities in Access to Community Services".
- 6 "Unfamiliarity within the community/alienation".
- 7 "Misuse of Authority and Abuse of Power".
- 8 "Voiced people being targeted".
- 9 "Lack of money and lack of creative and smart initiatives".

Focus Group 2

- 10 "Voiceless and disempowered youth".
- 11 "Crime, discrimination against marginalised groups and socioeconomic inequalities."
- 12 "Unsafety in the streets".
- 13 "Lack of opportunities and reintegration for people on probation".
- 14 "Dealing with trauma".
- 15 "Inadequate Communication-Access to Information".
- 16 "Lack of Community Engagement and Involvement".





SE16 2LJ

**BUILDING THE WORLD'S FIRST
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE POSTCODE**



17 "Lack of trust between authorities and community members".

18 "Illusion of a political divide and the divisive nature of online communication".

19 "Alienation, disconnection, division".

20 "Digital exclusion".

"Based on the outcome of what we discussed, what are your needs and how can the community help in this?"

Focus Group 1

1 "Scrutiny and research into the expenditure of local authorities – availability of information".

2 "Better education".

3 "Development of sports".

4 "Support green spaces, as safe spaces".

5 "Need for community, collaboration and connections".

6 "Invest on long term fixes".

7 "Redistributing power and promoting positive community engagement".

8 "Fostering a positive attitude in the community".

9 "Transparency and accountability in community matters".

10 "Fairness – appraisal and reprimand".

Focus Group 2

11 "Need for community bonds, community hubs, engagement and connections".

12 "Less isolation and segregation – take the time to connect".

13 "Development of sports".

14 "Better access to information and better allocation of money".





SE16 2LJ

**BUILDING THE WORLD'S FIRST
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE POSTCODE**



Recommendations

1. Strengthen Community Engagement and Inclusivity
2. Empower Youth and Address Socioeconomic Inequalities
3. Bridging Trust Gaps
4. Improve Communication and Access to Information
5. Equitable Access to Restorative Services
6. Long-term investment

Acknowledgment

Rotherhithe Consolidated Charities is supporting RJ4All's restorative justice circles, training sessions and speak up events; and is a member of the Restorative Justice Postcode Steering Group". Website address: www.rotherhithecc.co.uk



Rotherhithe Consolidated Charities

