Talking to families in East London

A report on the first stage of the research

Katharine Mumford

Neighbourhood Study

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Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion

The ESRC Research Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion (CASE) was established in October 1997 with funding from the Economic and Social Research Council. It is located within the Suntory and Toyota International Centres for Economics and Related Disciplines (STICERD) at the London School of Economics and Political Science, and benefits from support from STICERD. It is directed by Howard Glennerster, John Hills, Kathleen Kiernan, Julian Le Grand, Anne Power and Carol Propper.

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Introduction

The first round of interviews with 100 families living in two East London neighbourhoods has unearthed new information on problems and strengths in these areas, families' coping strategies, and area change. Families' dissatisfaction with the areas was high, compared with the national average. But many people in these areas thought they were getting better, far more than the national average. Families pointed to all sorts of improvements: physical changes, schools, community facilities, regeneration efforts.

Method

The two neighbourhoods studied were 'West-City' and 'East-Docks'. These are invented names to avoid stereotyping of the actual places. I interviewed 50 families in each neighbourhood. Some interviews were conducted over the summer of 1999, most occurred between September 1999 and February 2000. I contacted families through a variety of routes including school parents evenings, doctors' surgeries, a playgroup, a church, different community groups, and through families suggesting other people for me to talk to.

The neighbourhoods

West-City is situated on the edge of the City of London. East-Docks is on the edge of the new Docklands developments, which continue to be extended eastwards.

Both areas are predominantly made up of council housing. They were both devastated by the loss of key local industries from the mid-1960s onwards. West-City lost its traditional manufacturing businesses, whilst East-Docks suffered the closure of the docks and associated industries. In these neighbourhoods, the proportion of lone parents and the proportion of the working age population not in work, study or training, are higher than London averages and far exceed national averages.

Both were mainly white, working-class communities until the 1980s. Their racial composition has changed very rapidly.

Parts of West-City are becoming very trendy. House prices are high by national standards, and prices for flats

are close to the Greater London average despite the area's deprivation. The night-time economy is flourishing. This sometimes causes problems for local residents. New Deal for Communities is injecting significant resources.

In East-Docks, house prices have also risen, but remain lower than many parts of London and about half those in West-City. The area has recently been connected to the London Underground. East-Docks has more houses and fewer flats than West-City. Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) funding started in 1996, and the area is part of an Education Action Zone.

Emerging issues from the first round of interviews

Satisfaction

Twenty-two per cent of the families I interviewed in East-Docks and 30 per cent in West-City were dissatisfied with their area, compared with only 13 per cent nationally (Survey of English Housing, 1997/98). When considering the areas as a place to bring up children, dissatisfaction increased further. Families' worries for their children often included negative peer pressure, safety, drugs, pollution, lack of facilities and paedophiles. Dissatisfaction with accommodation was also much higher than the national average. Families living in flats often described the difficulties they encountered in bringing children up without their own outside space.

'Community spirit'

Around half the families in both neighbourhoods felt there was a lot of community spirit in their area. Black and ethnic minority residents sometimes pointed to a distinction between whether community spirit existed in their own ethnic and/or religious communities and whether it existed more generally among residents in the area. An extremely high proportion of families – nearly three quarters – felt that community spirit mattered. A lot more people thought it mattered than thought it existed, suggesting that even more community spirit would help.

The vast majority of the families interviewed were 'linked in' to their neighbourhoods in some way. There were many different links, including: being employed locally; taking on a responsible role (such as school governor); regularly helping out with their children's activities; attending school activities; using a local service; sending

their children to after-school clubs and Brownies; occasionally attending tenants' association meetings.

Neighbourhood change

These results were striking. Just over half of the West-City families, and 44 per cent of East-Docks families felt their neighbourhood was improving.

In both neighbourhoods, the main positive changes the families identified were: physical improvements, better community facilities, and the regeneration efforts underway. Most people thought both primary and secondary schools were getting better. Families often warned that there was still room for improvement, and that the schools had started from a low base, but they welcomed the changes.

A majority of the families also talked about issues of race, and the changing ethnic composition of the neighbourhoods. There were more positive or neutral comments than negative comments.

Changing childhoods

The vast majority of families in both neighbourhoods felt their children had less freedom to play outside because dangers had increased. This was the case for parents who had always lived in the neighbourhoods, for those who had grown up in other parts of England, and for those who had grown up in other countries.

People talked about the increase in supervised children's activities (such as going swimming). This could be seen as either a positive increase in opportunities, or as a defensive reaction to perceived dangers in the unsupervised environment. A few people mentioned that their children had better toys, didn't have to work as hard in the home as they did, or had the advantage of free health-care in this country.

What would help the families and the neighbourhoods?

I asked families what things they thought would help them most – these could be either things to do with the area as a whole, or things to do with their individual family. The top three in both neighbourhoods (though in slightly different orders) were:

- More facilities for children of all ages including supervised play areas and parks, somewhere for teenagers to go, and better childcare facilities.
- Better accommodation for the family.

- More money, to get a job, to get a better job, or to be assured of job security.

Overall

'Neighbourhood' problems can be very localised – one road or block can provide a completely different living environment to another one just minutes away. Families living in insecure blocks of flats with drug-taking on the stairwells pointed out that this dominated their lives. They were living in fear. Yet a few hundred yards down the road, other families talked about how safe and happy they felt in the area.

Strong individual characteristics, cohesive family life and local support networks help combat the effects of area problems such as crime and fear. Family difficulties such as isolation can make it harder to cope with these area problems.

Positive aspects of areas – like good support agencies – can boost families' coping strategies. Families can increase the strength of areas in a variety of ways, including taking on responsible roles, encouraging their children, having a vision for their area.

Through the community spirit, we join forces and fight.

Continuing research

The second round of interviews with the same families (at an average interval of around nine months) was completed in December 2000. The first round of interviews with 100 families in our new Leeds and Sheffield study has also been completed.

This ongoing research is continuing to explore the interaction between family life and neighbourhood conditions and to record the families' perspectives on the direction of neighbourhood change. Will the initial area and school improvements be sustained? Can the more difficult social problems be tackled?

There may be specific London-factors at work. For example, the pressurised property market which (until recently) has been raising values across the capital, may help explain why alongside a high level of dissatisfaction with existing conditions, many people felt their area was improving. In future reports we will compare results from East London with emerging findings from the Leeds/Sheffield study.

1 Introduction

To understand fully the dynamics of low income neighbourhoods, we need to understand the way in which individual families perceive and experience such areas. In what ways do low income areas affect or constrain families living in them? How do families cope with area problems? What factors do they see as helpful and what factors as harmful? How do their lives actually develop in the face of the constraints?

The Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion (CASE) is undertaking a qualitative, longitudinal study of families with children under 18. Our study is innovative in that it seeks to understand *area change* from the *perspective of families*. We aim to understand how the area where people live affects their lives, and thus more about the *processes* by which areas recover, stagnate or decline, getting 'under the skin' of the interaction between area change and family experience. We aim to link qualitative information on the lives and perspectives of families with small area trajectories and the experience of the wider region.

The first round of interviews with 100 families in two East London neighbourhoods has unearthed new information on problems and strengths in these low income areas, families' coping strategies, area change, and exclusionary and inclusionary forces.

In this initial report, I describe the method followed, the characteristics of the areas and the families involved, and discuss important issues emerging from the interviews so far. Readers may wish to skip the detailed method chapter: it is included as it forms an important part of the documentation of this initial stage.

Families, where willing, will be interviewed at six to nine monthly intervals. The second round of interviews is expected to add greatly to the information gathered so far. This report outlines our findings from the first interviews. In our next report we will build on this and draw policy conclusions.

Neighbourhood selection – links to the '12 Areas Study'

Our neighbourhood study involving families is linked to CASE's '12 Areas Study', which is researching 12 low income areas across England and Wales. This study is tracking the areas back to 1991 and forward to 2007 (depending on funding). Each of our 'areas' is made up of a series of levels: (1) regional; (2) local authority; (3) areas of approximately 20,000 people; and (4) estates/ small group of streets. The study aims to find out why some areas recover while others do not, and to assess the effectiveness of different interventions, including large government-driven regeneration schemes. To do this, Ruth Lupton is collecting a wide range of data, including: interviews with staff at all levels; health indicators; educational performance; housing indicators (such as empty property rates, turnover, stock condition); crime statistics; and a record of the aims and progress of the special initiatives being tried in each area.

The areas are in Hackney, Newham, Knowsley, Nottingham, Newcastle, Sheffield, Blackburn, Birmingham, Caerphilly, Redcar and Cleveland, Leeds and Thanet (Glennerster *et al.*, 1999).

The fieldwork for the study began to get underway in November 1998, and has already unearthed a wealth of information, providing a rich context in which to set the neighbourhood study.

From the beginning we aimed for four of our 12 areas to be the basis for the detailed neighbourhood study involving families. Four areas would enable the much more intensive fieldwork required for this study, but would be sufficient to enable useful comparisons and to make good use of the 12 Areas Study material. But with only one researcher (myself) to carry out all the fieldwork and analysis, realistically we decided we should start with two areas. This would allow me to become fully embedded in the areas.

We selected the two East London areas (from our 12 areas) because:

- Inner London contains a high proportion of the country's disadvantaged population. Eleven per cent of the total population of England and Wales' 'poverty wards' live in Inner London, yet Inner London comprises only 5 per cent of the total population of England and Wales (1991 Census).

- The two areas are set within the same overall context (i.e. East London), yet are in different London Boroughs and have different characteristics (housing type, ethnicity, histories). This enables comparison between families' experiences in each neighbourhood whilst holding the wider economic context constant.

- As well as both being located within the wider East London area, both areas are also comparable in their proximity to booming local economies – one is on the doorstep of the City of London, the other close to 'Docklands'. Surrounding up-turns do not appear to have had a significant impact on the overall deprivation of the areas, yet there is great potential.

- Having two neighbourhoods within the same region (East London) also gives the advantage of the study not being open to serious distortion by peculiar events in one small area.

- The research involves intensive fieldwork, which often cannot be planned far in advance because of the ad hoc nature in which contacts with families are built up. It would not be practicable to work virtually full-time, simultaneously, in two different regions of the country. This practical reason was an important consideration.

Once this East London study was underway, we also decided to apply to the Nuffield Foundation for additional funding to extend the study to neighbourhoods in two of our northern areas: Leeds and Sheffield. This study would be carried out by a researcher based in the Yorkshire and Humber region, and would mirror the London study. Given the different circumstances of these northern areas – particularly the wider economic environment – their inclusion would add a crucial dimension to our understanding of life in a wider range of low-income neighbourhoods. It would help explain the context in which both national policies towards low income families and specifically area-based policies operate. It would enable a comparison of the lives of people living in areas contrasting in ways such as: local employment patterns, migration, location of area in relation to city centre, housing demand, local schools and other public services, security and crime, and the extent of the geographical concentration of poverty. The Leeds/Sheffield study started in May 2000.

The neighbourhoods

We used the areas of approximately 20,000 people focused on by our 12 Areas Study in Hackney and Newham as a starting point. These areas do not correspond to exact ward-boundaries. We chose them on the basis of what made sense in terms of regeneration programme boundaries and data collection, in consultation with the two local authorities. We decided to use the term 'neighbourhood' to describe them, even though they are in fact much larger than what would normally be considered a neighbourhood. They could better be described as 'mega-neighbourhoods' (Furstenburg, 2000). We decided to use the term neighbourhood because we felt it conveyed a sense of 'home'. It was more personal than terms such as 'ward' or 'regeneration area'. Inevitably, area definitions are not fixed and people have different views (Chaskin, 1997).

We recognise that these can be relatively arbitrary boundaries, particularly from the perspective of residents. We decided that not all the families needed to actually be living within these boundaries, but that all should be recruited from within them. London is a complex city and people are pulled into neighbouring areas through community networks and to use specific services. Our method of contacting people through local services and by word-of-mouth meant that it was likely we would recruit some families who lived outside our main boundaries.

We felt that people living nearby would have an important perspective both as residents of the wider area (our overall focus was East London), and as people connected into the specific area through the use of key services or the existence of local social networks. For example, not all families using the doctors' surgery in East-Docks lived within the defined area but, where willing, they were included. The maps in the next section show the approximate location of all the families interviewed.

The families lived in the same general area – which has similar income levels and social conditions, even though there are some local differences. Thirteen families lived just outside the West-City boundaries, and 18 outside the defined East-Docks boundaries, eight of these concentrated in one other ward. We checked the interview feedback on key questions to see whether there was a different pattern of responses from families living in this other ward near East-Docks. We found that on the whole there was not, although the families in this pocket were slightly more likely to think they would move in the next two years, less likely to feel that their area had a lot of community spirit, and slightly more likely to feel their area was staying the same.

We call the Hackney neighbourhood 'West-City', and the Newham neighbourhood 'East-Docks'. These are invented names to avoid stereotyping of the actual neighbourhoods.

Initial visits to the neighbourhoods

It is extremely worthwhile to invest time in 'preparing the area', and to develop an easily recognisable logo for the study. (Smith, 1999.) The 12 Areas Study had already begun to make links between the neighbourhoods and CASE. As well as getting to know key people and services throughout my time in the field, I made contact with centrally-based officers (such as the assistant director of education, heads of research and directors of primary care), and other senior figures (such as community paediatricians). I also met with researchers experienced in family research, and with national organisations such as the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR), the Basic Skills Agency and MORI.

Table 1 lists the locally-based people/agencies that I met with from February 1999 to February 2000.

This was an ongoing process as I got to know the area and as contacts snowballed out. It started right at the beginning of the study, whilst I was still developing the method and devising the interview schedule, and continued whilst the family interviews were underway. In fact sometimes it was individual families who told me about local organisations, such as the playgroup, for example.

In West-City I attended resident meetings taking place as part of the New Deal for Communities preparations. In East-Docks, I held one focus group with pupils at a local secondary school, and another with parents at a primary school, both in July 1999, to begin to find out about people's experiences of the area.

Initial reactions

In both areas, locally-based staff warned about the areas being over-researched and about the possible unwillingness of people to take part, a concern which I tried to take on board by incorporating suggestions as to how the research findings could be most useful to residents and people running services locally. The

The Neighbourhood Study aims to find out how West-City
is changing, what the good things and bad things are,
what local services are doing, and what the area is like for
bringing up children.

We hope to pass on good ideas to the government and
people running services locally.

If you are willing to talk to us please phone:

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Figure 1 One of the leaflets we used during the recruitment showing our logo

residents' forum in West-City responded positively to the study and said they would be particularly interested to hear about the views of younger members of their community. The first residents interviewed in East-Docks (part of the initial area piloting) also responded positively – one father commenting that he thought it was good that we were taking the trouble to go and talk to people in their own homes. In both neighbourhoods, organisations with a local office agreed to let me use them as a base between interviews (these were the New Deal for Communities office in West-City, and the community involvement and research organisation in the Family Centre, East-Docks).

Safety

In East-Docks, local professionals warned me of the dangers in the area. They were concerned at the idea that I would be walking around the area alone, and interviewing families in their own homes. I thought about the safety issues very carefully, and sought a range of views. I put various measures in place (in relation to both areas) before I started interviewing: basic ground rules such as my administrative assistant always knowing my whereabouts; carrying a mobile phone and ringing in after each interview; not interviewing men alone; and occasionally being accompanied by interested volunteers (LSE students mainly).

Table 1 Meetings with local people/organisations, February 1999 – February 2000

West-City	East-Docks
Community worker – specific estate	East-Docks SRB
Community worker – West-City	Community development officer, community project
Tenants' association Chair and activist	Under-8s worker, large community project
Residents at an Area Forum (part of New Deal for Communities)	Community Involvement and Research Organisation
Private housing management contractor	Community project specialising in work with refugees
Head, primary school	Head, primary school
Two New Deal for Communities 'master-planning meetings'	Head, secondary school
	Head, nursery school
Community Nurse Team Manager	Director, family centre
Playgroup	Local vicar
Patch meeting, Primary Care Group	Locality Manager, health clinic
Refugee Women's Association conference	Health visitors team meeting
Parent support group	Social services
Under-5s project	Community organisation providing adult education and youth activities
	Community paediatrician and colleagues in the Community Child Health Department

We decided it was important not to make an issue of visiting people in their homes – not to be influenced by stereotypes of the areas as unsafe places. Unsurprisingly, people treated me as a guest in their home, rather than an intruder. They were helping me with the research and had invited me in. This reduced risks (Smith, 1999).

Interview schedule development

The interview schedule was semi-structured, comprising a mixture of open-ended and more structured questions with defined, quantifiable response options. We decided to focus on the families' views of the area, particularly in relation to their children, in the first interview. It was very important that we did not impose on the families and we decided not to probe very personal details of their lives. Of course, we explained that the interview was anonymous; we would not identify individual families.

In order to enable some comparison with the responses of people living around the country, we incorporated a number of questions from national surveys, based on the 'harmonised concepts and questions for government social surveys', the Housing Attitudes Survey (Hedges and Clemens, 1994), and questions used by the Basic Skills Agency. We also incorporated some questions from the DETR's residents' surveys in seven Single Regeneration Budget areas, in discussion with the DETR and MORI (who carried out the survey).

The final schedule was arrived at after extensive consultation within CASE and externally with other research organisations, the DETR, and other agencies (such as the Basic Skills Agency), and after piloting initially outside the two study neighbourhoods (with three families). Piloting continued for the first five interviews within the neighbourhoods. By this time the schedule was nearing its final form, and we included these families in our total.

The questions in this first interview covered the following.

- Basic information about the family, including tenure, household composition, ethnicity, marital status, employment status and occupation, qualifications, income, access to car and telephone.
- Questions about the area: housing history, reasons for moving to the area, satisfaction with the area as a place to live and as a place to bring up children, likes and dislikes, likelihood of moving, changes in the area, regeneration attempts, area image.
- Schools: satisfaction with schools, reputation, contact with, reasons for choosing primary and secondary schools, thoughts about future choice of school (where pre-primary or pre-secondary children), how children were getting on at school, help with children's reading and homework. We also included a short section on childminding and babysitting arrangements.

- 'Community': existence of 'community spirit', location of friends and relatives, contact with neighbours, participation in local groups, feelings of involvement in the local community.
- The future: hopes for the family; thoughts about children's destination on leaving school, degree of optimism and concerns about obstacles, what would most help the area and the family, and whether the area was getting better, worse or staying the same.

Observation

I kept notes of my experiences of being in both neighbourhoods at different times of the day and evening: using public transport, subways, walking through parks, observations of smashed cars, litter, different parts of the neighbourhoods with varying housing forms, spending time in doctors' waiting areas, schools, other local statutory and voluntary settings. I also took photographs.

Attrition

We do not expect all the original families to take part in subsequent waves of the research, mainly because they may move. We have decided to attempt to carry out a follow-up interview with families who move out of the area, where it is possible to contact them. We will ask them crucial questions about: their reasons for moving; how they compare their new home/area with the old; how they have settled in; future movement plans. We also intend to replace people who move or choose not to continue participating, to keep the overall number of families involved in each wave at a minimum of 50.

The crucial thing has been to try to minimise the chances of losing contact with families. We have done this by the following methods.

- Following basic etiquette – as well as sending thank you letters which we would have sent anyway, also sending Christmas cards.
- Keeping people informed of the progress of the research by brief letter/summary report.
- Where people have indicated they are likely to move within the next six months, taking a note of their mobile phone number or the contact details of a friend or relative who we could contact instead. We have also used, though only to a very limited extent, a permission slip to trace the family's new address through the local education authority (which requires one child's date of birth).

Only time will tell how many people are willing to remain involved in the research.

Contacting families

This was perhaps the most unknown element of the study. Would people be willing to take part? How would I find them? Could I achieve a mix of families broadly representative of the neighbourhood's population? What language difficulties might I encounter?

Figure 2 shows how all the families became involved. It illustrates how I built the sample up over time, trying many and varied routes. The interviewing really got underway from September 1999 and was completed in mid-February 2000.

We ruled out some potential routes at the outset. The first of these was random door-knocking. Some people have found this to be a very successful method (Barnes McGuire, 1999). But we decided that it was not appropriate, both for security reasons (as I was a lone researcher) and because of the relatively small target size of our sample (meaning that we would not attempt to achieve statistical randomness).

The second method we could not use was an 'opt out' approach, using databases of names and addresses to sample families with particular characteristics, writing to suggest an appointment to discuss the research, and then attending on that date unless they sent back a reply slip asking us not to come. This method has also been successful in the past (Smith, 1999). We could not use this method because we did not have access to names and addresses, and our timetable did not allow for the necessary lead-in time to arrive at such access.

We experimented with writing to families through one local primary school in West-City. The head agreed to send out the letters via the school, so he would not be releasing names and addresses directly to us. (The letters were in both English and Turkish, the other main language spoken by parents.) This inevitably had to rely on individual families 'opting in' by returning a slip to the school saying they would like to take part and giving their name and contact details. Only one family responded out of a possible 70. This is consistent with the experience of other researchers – for example, receiving four responses from 600 letters sent out through schools in Boston, USA (Barnes McGuire, 1999).
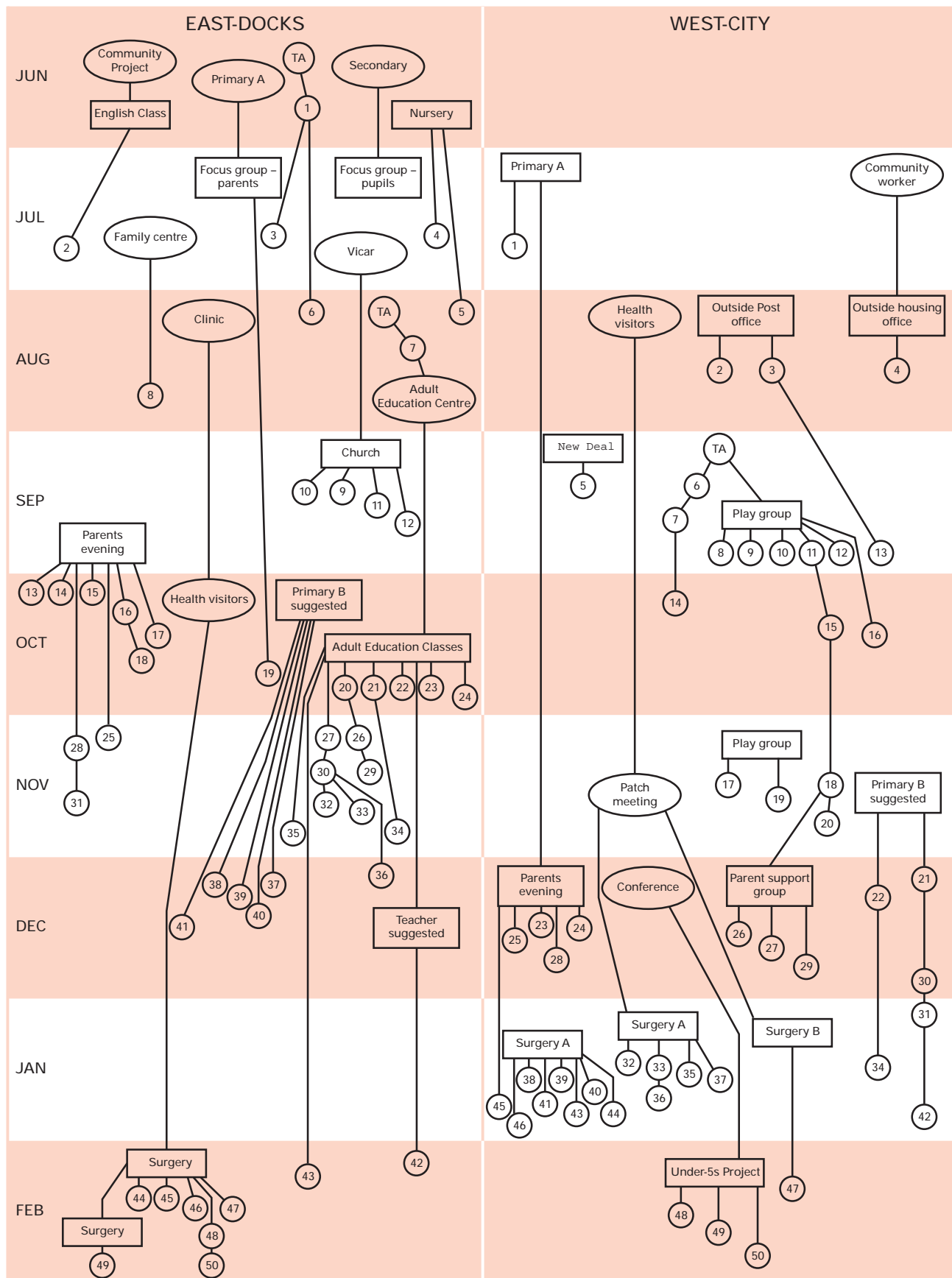
Figure 2 How all the families became involved

Table 2 Points of contact with families

	West-City		East-Docks	
	Number of families interviewed	Approximate response rate[1] (%)	Number of families interviewed	Approximate response rate (%)
Doctors' surgeries	12	55	6	32
Snowballing	11	**	12	**
Adult education classes	–	–	8	62
Church	–	–	4	**
Playgroup	8	80	–	–
Primary school – attending parents evening	5	63	6	50**
Parent support group	3	75	–	–
Under-5s project – workers suggested people	3	100	–	–
Primary schools – suggesting specific parents	2	**	5	83
Nursery school – head suggesting specific parents	–	–	2	100
Outside post office	2	50	–	–
Outside housing office	1	25	–	–
Primary school – letters sent	1	1	–	–
New Deal for Communities public meeting	1	50	–	–
Follow-up from primary school focus group	–	–	2	50
Tenants' association link	1	100	2	100
Adult education teacher suggesting specific people	–	–	1	33
Community project for refugees	–	–	1	50
Family centre – specific suggestion	–	–	1	50
Total	**50**	–	**50**	–

1 Response rate of families asked. I could not necessarily approach all the families who attended, especially at busy events like parents evenings. I have counted people who initially agreed but were not interviewed, for whatever reason, as non-responses.

** This is where I do not have a clear record of the number of refusals: it was sometimes difficult to keep a count, for example where I was inviting all the parents in a church congregation to take part. Similarly, with the snowballing method, it is difficult to arrive at a response rate because usually people would ask their friends or relatives on my behalf, before giving me their contact details directly.

I therefore decided to go to the places that families use and speak to them in person about the research. This face-to-face contact was generally quite successful, although it varied between different places and even different days or weeks. I also asked the families I interviewed whether they knew of anyone else who might be prepared to talk to me – this snowballing method was also successful, and reached further into the neighbourhoods in the sense of involving people who would not necessarily have responded to the other recruitment methods. Having received approval from the health authority's ethics committee, I was also able to start recruiting from doctors' waiting areas from January 2000. Table 2 shows the different sources.

Although the response rates from the doctors' waiting areas were sometimes low, I did find a greater diversity of families attending them in terms of both very low and quite high income households (more of the latter in West-City). It seems that the local surgery is the one place in the neighbourhood that all income groups use, and therefore a very good source point. The health visitors working from the surgeries were very helpful in introducing me to mothers who without this introduction might otherwise not have taken part. One of the West-City surgeries had a particular advantage in that a Turkish advocate attends the mother and baby clinic, and he approached Turkish and Kurdish families on my behalf, with success. I also took a Turkish interpreter with me to the primary school parents evening in West-City which was very helpful. The under-

5s project helped me with interpretation for both Turkish and Punjabi speaking families.

I only stood outside the housing office and the post office in West-City on one occasion each. I personally felt more comfortable when I was in a setting where my presence had been validated by a trusted figure (such as a head, health visitor, playgroup leader, vicar, doctor, other organisational setting). In all the settings I went to, I was struck by the number of families that did seem to trust me and agree quite readily, but I was happier to know that if anyone did have any questions they could go back to their 'source agency' for reassurance.

This trust also implies a concomitant responsibility, of course. It is quite easy to be seen as a 'friend' and it is important not only to make clear the purpose of the interview, but to then endeavour to use the material in the interests of the participants, at least in the broadest sense (Finch, 1993). We did of course undertake not to use details that could identify an individual family. In this particular context, using the material in the broad interests of the participants also means not representing the families in a way that is derogatory to them, and working to analyse the material in a way that informs practical policy, i.e. that is useful. Describing individuals as being 'socially excluded' feels disrespectful and inappropriate. Social exclusion is not about 'categories' of people, but about the differential constraints and opportunities facing them.

The interviews

The respondent was usually (but not always) the mother, because families almost always rely on the mother (or other key female) as organiser. Our main point of contact was places where families go, and it was usually mothers who were present. For this reason we wanted a female researcher. The interviews focused on the family as a whole, and I took the opportunity to involve other family members in the interview where possible.

Eighty-four per cent of the interviews took place in the family's home. The other interviews took place at: the under-5s project; the community project for refugees; the parent support group; the schools; and in one case in the home of a relative who had already been interviewed. This was either for reasons of convenience (e.g. working or volunteering there), for translation purposes, or because

the families had the choice (because the source organisation had offered the space) and opted not to be interviewed at home (only three families opted for this). One East-Docks group insisted that I carry out any interviews on their premises as they were concerned at the idea of lone home-visiting generally. (In practice, only one interview was arranged through this group.)

I recorded answers directly onto the interview schedule. I taped and transcribed 7 per cent of the interviews. We decided to only tape a small number of interviews for practical reasons (the time-consuming nature of transcription) and because circumstances were often inappropriate; for example, where children were present, where the television was on, or where it felt that it would have been off-putting to the interviewee even to ask. I did take very detailed notes during the interviews, and recorded actual speech as much as possible.

The aim was for each interview to take just under an hour; enough time to explore a number of issues and to collect basic information about the family but, we hoped, short enough not to be a burden or to put people off a second interview. The shortest interview was 25 minutes and the longest was one hour and 40 minutes (several family members and friends were involved in this interview). The average (mean) length was 56 minutes.

Only at the end of the interview did I ask families whether they would be prepared to talk to me again in about six months; 100 per cent of families gave their agreement, in principle. Having asked this, I then gave each family a £5 Boots voucher as a token of appreciation for their time. Most people were very pleased and many commented that it was a nice surprise. A small minority was nonplussed. No-one appeared offended. One mother declined it. Another mother said she did not use Boots but would sell it to her friend.

I did experience a significant number of missed appointments, i.e. when I arrived at the house, no-one was in, or they had forgotten and it was no longer convenient for them at that time. The total number of missed appointments, including those I knew about in advance through having spoken to the family on the telephone, was 28 (representing 27 families). I later interviewed 11 of these families. Table 3 shows the reasons for missed appointments.

Table 3 Reasons for missed appointments

Reason	Number missed	Number later arranged
Forgot	5 (4 people)	4
Not known	5	0
Work commitments/otherwise too busy	3	0
Decided against taking part (explicitly)	3	0
Interviewee ill	2	1
Child ill	2	1
Other relative ill	2	1
Bereavement	1	1
Eviction threat	1	1
Had to go to school to sort out bullying problem	1	1
Interviewer couldn't attract attention to get inside	1	1
Had to visit child's father	1	0
Other	1	0
Total	**28**	**11**

West-City

The schematic map in Figure 3 shows the broad layout of the neighbourhood (shaded area), and the number of families interviewed in each part of it. The listing of local facilities is not meant to be exhaustive, but to give an idea of where I met the families and the location of the facilities mentioned in the text below.

History

West-City was originally a 'place of rural retreat'. Even in the mid-eighteenth century there was still a relatively small number of buildings, and market gardening was a significant activity. The area has long been associated with the arts – theatres were established there in the sixteenth century. From the late 1700s, West-City's growth was very rapid, and its population more than doubled between 1821 and 1851 as industrialisation made its mark (see Table 4). Most of the housing built during this time was two-storey terraced houses. The rich gradually migrated outwards and the area gained a poor reputation (Mander, 1996).

Table 4 West-City's population 1801–1991

Year	Population
1801	34,766
1821	52,966
1851	109,257
1861	129,364 (peak)
1891	124,553
1901	118,637
1921	104,248
1931	97,042
1951	44,871
1991	26,765[1]

Source: Mander, 1996 (1801-1951 figures) and Lupton, 2000 (1991 figure[1]).

1 This represents the population of the four electoral wards containing West-City (as currently defined by the New Deal for Communities), based on the 1991 census. The area boundaries are unlikely to be consistent with those used for the previous periods' figures, so caution should be exercised in making a direct comparison.

The main sources of employment were gas works, and a range of manufacturing industries (including those associated with the canal). Furniture and shoe manufacturing were the two key trades – consisting of both large and small firms.

This industrial activity is now largely a thing of the past. The last gas works was destroyed by a bomb in 1944, as were many local businesses. The manufacturing industries were affected by advancing technology: from 1965 many of the older businesses closed, and one of the large shoe firms went bankrupt in the 1970s (Mander, 1996).

Depopulation was associated not only with job losses, but also with slum clearance and council redevelopment which started in the inter-war years and continued after the second world war. For example, the redevelopment of one pocket in 1938 displaced 2,400 people, of whom 1,000 were rehoused outside West-City (Mander, 1996).

West-City in 2000?

West-City is on the fringe of the City of London. It is a mixed area in some ways – mixed income, ethnicity, businesses, shops and market stalls. Parts of West-City have become very trendy. New cafés, restaurants, a cinema, theatres and clubs are thriving. But there are still traditional, inexpensive cafés and shops.

West-City does not have much diversity of housing tenure. Most of it is now dominated by a large number of medium-size, council-owned, mainly post-war deck-access flats and tower blocks. In all there are 29 housing estates in the area, all of which meet DETR criteria for the UK's most deprived estates (Lupton, 1999a). Eighty-two per cent of people live in social housing (West-City New Deal Trust, 1999). The estates on the whole are quite dilapidated, in need of care and repair. Many entrances are without secure intercom systems. In some of the blocks, a majority of residents have fitted iron bars in front of their doors.

Figure 3 Layout of the neighbourhood of West-City

WEST-CITY

2 Families

3 Families

Primary

1 Family

Primary

Secondary

Museum

3 Families

Nursery   Health
Centre

7 Families

New Deal Shop

Market

Community
Garden

First stop
shop &
library

College

Town Hall

Canal

5 Families

8 Families

Primary
Leisure
Centre

Park

Shops

Doctors   Project

Shops

Primary

Play
group
Primary

Shops

Under 5s

7 Families

Primary

2 Families

Fire
Station

Primary

12 Families

Housing
Office

Post
Office

Shops

Hospital

Some of the council estates in the area

Mixture of street properties and flats, varying tenure

Houses being built for housing association shared ownership

Insecure entrance to tower block

Council flats

Table 5 Approximate prices of property in the West-City area		
1-Bed flat		
	Private	£110,000 upwards
	Ex-local authority	£90,000 – £95,000
2-Bed flat/maisonette		
	Private	£150,000 upwards
	Ex-local authority	£110,000
3-Bed flat/maisonette		
	Private (unusual)	£210,000 – £220,000
	Ex-local authority	£115,000 – £135,000
3-Bed house		
	Private	£260,000 upwards
	Ex-local authority	£170,000

Source: Local estate agent's estimates, March 2000.

Note: The estate agent reported that prices were still increasing gradually. He felt that owners were pushing them up, demanding higher prices because of all the media attention. And buyers were prepared to pay.

House prices are very high throughout the area, even for ex-council properties. A former local authority three bedroom maisonette close to a popular road was recently advertised at £120,000 (*Islington Gazette*, 24 February 2000). A studio flat with a terrace in the same vicinity was recently advertised at a rent of £300 per week! (*Evening Standard*, 23 March 2000). A local estate agent quoted the prices detailed in Table 5.

Ethnicity

West-City is now ethnically very diverse. During the 1950s the population gradually began to become more mixed, with inward migration of people from the West Indies and Asia (Mander, 1996). Until the 1980s the area's population was still mainly white, however; since this time it has rapidly become more diverse. In 1991, 'white' people represented 72 per cent of the population in the area. This had decreased to 63 per cent by 1999. (The census definition of 'white' includes Turkish, Kurdish, Irish and other European groups.) There has been an increase in Kurdish and Turkish residents who now form 5 per cent of households in the area. Twenty per cent of households speak a language other than English at home (West-City New Deal Trust, 1999, based on a 10 per cent sample).

White residents are concentrated in older age groups, with black and ethnic minorities having a much younger age profile. Seventy-three per cent of children have black and ethnic minority parents (West-City New Deal Trust,

1999). Figures derived from primary schools' ethnicity data indicate that only 22 per cent of children at nine primary schools serving the area are white-UK (Hackney Education, 1999).

Facilities

West-City offers a wide range of facilities:

- nearby hospital
- a thriving market is a central part of the neighbourhood
- a community college has recently built a large campus in the middle of the area, offering a large range of day and evening courses
- new library and 'First Stop Shop'
- night-time economy (although this can cause problems for local residents)
- large leisure centre offering a range of activities (some families find that these are not affordable)
- seven primary schools within the area (with varying educational performance and denomination), and several other primary schools nearby
- good public transport links, depending which part of the neighbourhood you live in
- playgroups and other clubs and community groups for children and older people (although most families feel a lot more is needed)
- small playgrounds within *some* estates
- active churches
- museum with displays of domestic interiors from different eras; entrance is free
- two doctors' surgeries housed in modern premises which feel light and comfortable
- post offices
- New Deal for Communities is injecting significant sums of money into parts of West-City
- Health Action Zone.

However, the area lacks a large supermarket, bank or building society. The only secondary school in the area is an all girls' school.

Transport

There is an underground station situated at the corner of the neighbourhood boundaries we are using. This tube link is generally very good, but its usefulness depends of course on whereabouts people live in relation to it. West-City is also linked by bus to many different destinations, including the centre of Hackney, Islington and the City. Bus journeys, even in the middle of the day, can be unreliable and slow because of the heavy traffic in this and neighbouring areas.

Planted area and small playground

Leisure centre

Bright and airy building
housing two GP practices

Waiting area inside one of the practices, with puppet display

Museum: entrance is free

Community garden

Table 6 Recorded crimes per 1,000 population[1], July 1997 – June 1998

	Criminal damage	Violence against person	Sexual offences	Robbery	Burglary, dwelling	Burglary, other	Drugs supply	Vehicle crime
Hackney	144	173	155	226	162	105	200	165
Newham	128	128	100	171	141	114	100	148
MPD[2]	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
England and Wales	94	54	55	35	105	148	80	104

Source: London Borough of Newham and the Metropolitan Police, 1998/99.

1 Per 1,000 households for residential burglary.
2 Average crime rates for the whole of the Metropolitan Police District were set at 100. Each borough's figures are then expressed in relation to this index.

Crime

Hackney and Newham both have significantly higher crime rates than the Metropolitan average and the England average. Hackney is worse than Newham. The figures in Table 6 compare the rates of different criminal offences in Hackney, Newham, the Metropolitan Police District (MPD), and England and Wales.

Hackney had significantly higher crime during this period than the average for the Metropolitan Police District, particularly with regard to violence against the person, robbery and drugs supply. The local police inspector identified motor vehicle crime as being a particular problem in West-City. Otherwise, he felt the problems that stood out in the area were fear of crime, and annoyance of the elderly by young people (Lupton, 1999b).

Unemployment

As West-City's once thriving local employment declined from the mid-1960s onwards, unemployment became a serious problem. Unemployment has been falling recently; data available from 1996 show that the reduction in West-City's unemployment has been at a rate broadly in line with the Hackney average. But at April 2000, Hackney's unemployment rate was still 9.8 per cent; much higher than the national average of 3.8 per cent (Lupton, forthcoming).

Table 7 Problems and strengths of West-City's environment

Problems	Strengths/potential
Some severe patches of graffiti, including down by the canal.	The canal that bounds the area has a path running alongside it and some benches. It is the scene of much new development.
The main park is bare, lacking public play equipment. Many families did not use it.	The main park is a large green space in an otherwise very built-up area. It includes football pitches, and a separate play-park. The New Deal for Communities has highlighted it as a priority for action.
Traffic and associated pollution, with extremely busy urban through-routes. Parking problems.	There are several smaller parks nearby, and small play areas on some estates. There is a public garden near the market.
Poor appearance of communal areas within and around some blocks of flats.	The private contractor that won the council's housing management contract for the neighbourhood has planted flower-beds and reintroduced caretakers on some estates.
Lack of security in some blocks of flats.	The New Deal for Communities is installing some door-entry systems.

West-City is the lowest income area in Hackney, which is London's second poorest borough (Lupton, forthcoming). According to the 10 per cent sample of West-City, 59 per cent of households with children received housing benefit or income support, and 25 per cent of households with children were 'getting into difficulties' with their finances (West-City New Deal Trust, 1999).

Environment

The photographs illustrate the diversity of West-City's built environment. Table 7 attempts to capture other environmental aspects of the neighbourhood; it has clear strengths but there are also a number of problems.

What do families living in the area think?

I asked families what words they would choose to sum up the area, if they were describing it to someone who did not know it. Their responses illustrate the diverse nature of this area – its great strengths as well as its difficulties. They are summarised in Table 8. Some families described both positive and negative aspects.

Table 8 The words families used to describe West-City

A positive place
- Exciting, there's a real buzz about it. Very cosmopolitan.
- Very nice.
- It's fine to live. The good thing about it is you're in the middle of London. You're near to the shops and the market. It's comfortable. You've got a mixture of people round here.
- Nice and quiet.
- Friendly.
- Quite comfortable.
- It is a community – it is a little urban village within London – it's warm and friendly.
- The diversity.
- I just liked it from the moment I arrived. I just walked up the road and thought 'I like it here'.
- Accessibility, variety, good place to raise a family.
- It can be quite a fun, lively friendly place to live in.
- Quite nice, lovely. I love living here now.
- Stimulating.
- It's nice place. No problem. It's good.
- Clean place. Not bad.
- Family, residential area.
- Mixed community.
- Good!
- Nice little borough.

A secure place
- Clean, secure.
- It's safe with the right people. You've got your friends and they help you if you need help.
- Very secure.
- Here is quite calm. I think it's not dangerous. I never saw anything in the street.
- It's a safe area.

Some good services and facilities
- The police are around a lot, keeping an eye on the problems.
- The market, the museum.
- Transport links are good.
- Not bad flats.

It's just home
- I don't know no different. I just like living here. I wouldn't want to live anywhere else.
- Friendly people. But it's all down to whether you make an effort. There are people in this block that you don't know anything about – they keep themselves to themselves.

Table 8 The words families used to describe West-City (Cont.)

- It's OK. It's fine round here.
- I'm not sure what to say.

On the way up …
- It's really coming up now – with more shops, the college, more businesses opening up. It's a bit livelier than it used to be.
- It is progressing. I don't know if it's safe for children.
- It's an up and coming area – it would be marvellous if they sorted out the drugs and housing.
- For the last year or two I have seen a lot of building going on – nice buildings going up. It looks like eventually it will be a nice area.

Good in some ways, but it has its problems
- It's a good place, but there is good and bad.
- Ethnic groups together – that's the only positive thing.
- Not too bad to live in, but not too good either. There's a lot of room for improvement.
- Inside some of the flats are beautiful, but outside is grey.
- This road is an oasis, it is very pretty and closed to traffic so it's very quiet, but the surrounding area is very run-down.
- They are trying – they do keep repairing the lift – so I don't know what to say.
- It's a good area, good people here, it's quiet. But they should look after buildings. I don't know what they do in their office – only stay there.

Negative feelings …
- Don't ever move to West-City!
- I'm here because I came years ago and my family are all here, but I would never advise anyone to move into it. This place went downhill when West-City was put in together with Hackney. All the problems from up there came down here.
- Not very nice.
- Frustrating.
- Scum, rotten, the down and outs, the low life. Not everyone's like that. But you don't seem to know anybody anymore. They move in and out. They get in and shut their door and don't want to know.
- Problem families are being moved in here.
- There's no atmosphere in any of the pubs now. No community spirit except in the market – that little elderly clique are the last bastion.

Insecurity, roughness, drugs
- People can live. But it's not safe. We have a gate on the front door and balcony.
- Robbery, fear, very deprived.
- Unsafe.
- We need a place to help people on drugs round here.
- It's just the drug pushers.
- It can be a bit rough.

Lack of jobs, poor environment and services
- Need more jobs round here.
- Load of shit – just so horrible and grotty.
- It can be quite depressing, the same thing every day. It needs improvement, definitely.
- Failing. It's general things – it's as though there's a lot there, but when you apply to use the services, they're not easy to obtain at all.
- Noisy, dirty.
- Air polluted.
- Stark – all concrete.
- Poor houses.
- A bit of a run-down area. They could do more to update it. My block was built just after the war.
- Dump! Run-down but they are trying to build it up … but then you get some people who don't care.

Flower-beds in front of council flats

The private housing management
contractor continues to plant ...

Part of the canal

The main park – people criticise the lack of play
equipment in it for children – it is quite bare

East-Docks

The schematic map in Figure 4 shows the broad layout of the neighbourhood, and the number of families interviewed in each part of it. Again, the listing of local facilities is not meant to be exhaustive, but to give an idea of where I met the families and the location of the local agencies/activities mentioned in the text below. Facilities in the areas outside the neighbourhood boundaries we used (the shaded area) are not marked, nor are individual shops.

History

Like West-City, the wards surrounding East-Docks were also a rural retreat for the wealthy between the 1500s and the early 1800s. Marshland had been reclaimed for arable farming and market gardening (Padfield, 1999). East-Docks itself began to be settled in the early 1840s (Bloch, 1996). At its peak in 1921, the population of the old county borough containing East-Docks was 300,860. Since then, the population has declined to just a third of that total (Aston Community Involvement Unit, 1996).

The development of the docklands from the middle of the nineteenth century transformed East-Docks into a busy industrial hub. This group of docks represented 'the largest area of impounded dock water in the world' (Bloch, 1995). As well as activity directly related to the docks, jobs arose from the new industries that sprang up around them. A large gas works nearby was also a major source of work.

Large numbers of terraces were built to house the workers. A lot of the work was casual and unemployment and poverty were features of the area even then. The population was very mixed. Black seamen settled in the area in the years before and during the First World War, and East-Docks had the largest black population in London in the 1930s (Bloch, 1995). Racial tension existed then, with evidence of street violence against black seamen in 1919 (Aston Community Involvement Unit, 1996).

The housing, docks and associated industries were badly bombed during the Second World War. The docks and many of the factories did recover from this damage (although there was some re-siting of industry as part of the area's redevelopment). They soon received another huge blow in the form of changing world trade patterns and advancing technology. Many of the long-established factories moved away, reduced their workforces, or closed down completely during the 1960s and 1970s. The gas works and docks closed down between the late 1960s and the early 1980s. 'A way of life had gone forever' (Bloch, 1995).

East-Docks in 2000?

East-Docks is on the edge of the 'new' Docklands, though new housing and commercial developments are being extended eastwards all the time. It has a stigmatised image within Newham due to its physical isolation, lack of resources, redevelopment of its housing after the extensive war-time damage, and its perceived white working-class character (now changing), leading to impressions of toughness, cliques and racism (Cattell and Evans, 1999).

House prices have risen over the past year, but remain lower than in many other parts of London and certainly much lower than those in West-City. It is still possible to obtain a three-bedroom house for under £100,000. However, these prices are of course still beyond the reach of many families and are expensive relative to places outside London. A two-bedroom ex-council maisonette, two minutes walk from the station, was advertised at a price of £85,000 (*Metro*, 14 January 2000). Table 9 gives some other examples.

A major exhibition centre is being built alongside a nearby dock. A mixed development of private and housing association homes is nearing completion on the other side

Table 9 Examples of asking prices for property in the environs of East-Docks	
1-Bed flat	
Private	£65,000 (studio, central location)
Ex-local authority	£55,000
2-Bed flat/maisonette	
Private	£68,500
Ex-local authority	£85,000 (very close to station)
3-Bed house	
Private	£99,950 – £122,000
Ex-local authority	–
4-Bed house	
Private	£125,000
Ex-local authority	£109,000
Source: Based on a selection of details supplied by a local estate agent, April 2000, and *Metro*, January 2000.	
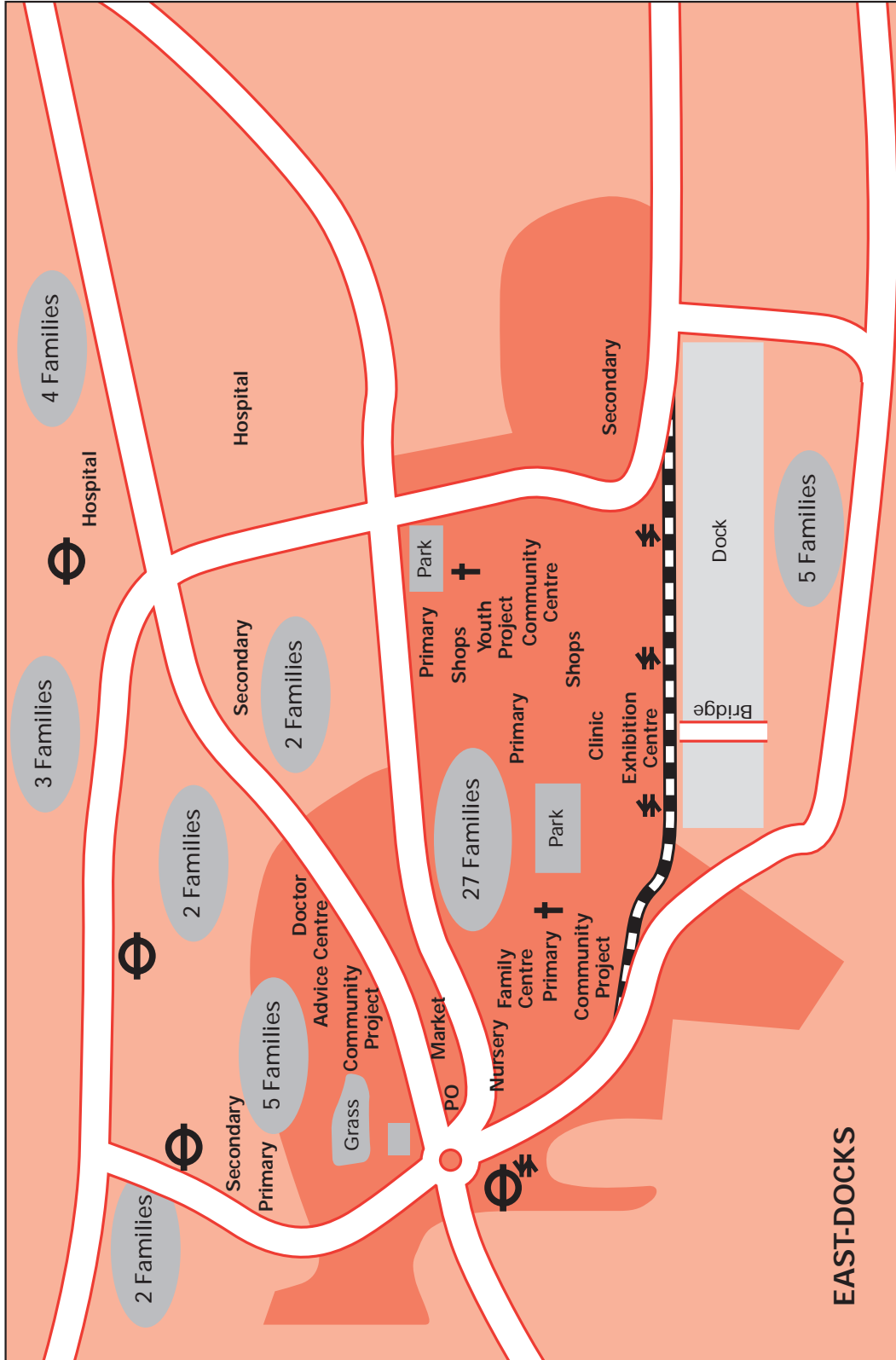
Figure 4 Layout of the neighbourhood of East-Docks

*The new pedestrian bridge –
seen from above and below*

Construction of the exhibition centre

of this dock. A bold new pedestrian footbridge links East-Docks to this area.

The Single Regeneration Budget programme began in 1996 and is a seven-year programme. Its four core priorities are business investment; training/education; housing; and community development.

The area is dominated by social housing, with 68 per cent council housing and 7 per cent housing association (East-Docks Partnership, 1996). Correspondingly, there is little private housing in the neighbourhood itself; just a few rows of old terraces and small new estates. The council estates are a combination of post-war tower blocks, terraced houses, and small walk-up blocks of flats and maisonettes.

A major triple-carriage road brutally splits the area; south of this road, East-Docks is self-contained and somewhat isolated. It is surrounded by this major road on one side, by another busy road and fencing on the side opposite the train station, and by the dock road at the bottom.

The main shopping centre is north of the major road, which forms quite a barrier with its six lanes of traffic. There are subways, but these can be quite dark even in the day-time.

The area is quite rundown. There is a lot happening nearby, land values are increasing and some blocks have been refurbished, but its recovery is still in the early stages.

Post-war council houses
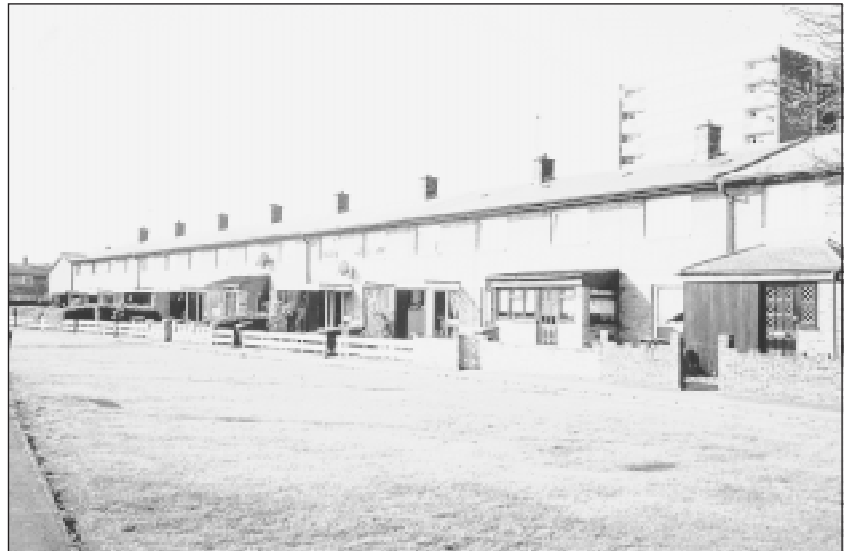
Low-rise and high-rise flats

Mixed housing forms in East-Docks

The fence along one side of East-Docks

One of the subways beneath the major road between south East-Docks and the shopping centre

Ethnicity

East-Docks remains less diverse than the rest of Newham, but it is becoming more mixed (as it used to be before the second world war). Just 61 per cent of pupils at five primary schools and two secondary schools serving the area were classed as 'white' in January 1999 (Newham Education, 1999). This compares with 76 per cent of 0–17 year olds being 'white' at the 1991 census.

Facilities

- The shops are basic but varied, and there is a small supermarket. A local market is popular. A nearby High Street has a range of small shops. There is a large shopping centre at Stratford.
- McDonalds.
- Parks and open space.
- Post office.
- A number of active community groups, including one of the original Christian settlements, a parent support group, youth projects, a community project working with refugees, a community education service, and a community-led project in a converted church which houses a labour hire agency, doctors, and a rent-a-desk scheme for small businesses amongst a range of other activities.
- Very good public transport links, depending on which part of the area you live in.
- Churches.
- Primary schools and secondary schools within the area (of varying performance and denomination), including a newly built secondary school which opened in the autumn term of 1999.
- Education Action Zone making noticeable improvements, Sure Start getting underway in parts of the area, Health Action Zone.

Facilities such as a leisure centre and cinema complex can be found fairly nearby, but not within the area itself.

Transport

Until recently, transport links were poor. This has changed significantly with the development of the Docklands Light Railway and, even more recently, the extension of the underground to this area and improved bus services. East-Docks has had a tube station since 1999, housed in impressive new premises where the Docklands Light Railway, Silverlink services and a variety of bus services also stop. It takes under 25 minutes to get from East-Docks into central London on the tube or Docklands Light Railway. City Airport is nearby.

The inadequacy of the transport links over the years has led to many of the other problems that we see today. The rapid and dramatic improvement has yet to work its way through, but I think it will ultimately result in more people seeking and getting employment elsewhere, in consequentially greater wealth and in a greater sense of satisfaction in the area. (Director, local community project)

Of course, these public transport connections are very good for some, but not for others, depending on which part of the area they live in. Some families I interviewed live closer to other train stations. Some are not in easy reach of any train station and instead rely on buses – as shown on the map.

A small parade of shops
in the neighbourhood

The new train station

This converted church houses a whole
range of community-led initiatives

Crime

Overall, East-Docks does not have a higher reported crime rate than the rest of Newham. Furthermore, Newham's crime rates are lower than Hackney's for all categories of offence except 'non-residential burglary'. (The rates for July 1997 to June 1998 are recorded in the discussion of West-City.)

Rates of crime against vehicles are higher than the national average but not the inner city average. Twenty-three per cent of households with vehicles in East-Docks experienced a theft of or from motor vehicles in 1997/98, compared with just 18 per cent in England and Wales and 17 per cent in another SRB area in Newham. The figure for inner city areas in England and Wales was just higher than East-Docks though, at 24 per cent (Crime & Disorder Audit, 1998/99).

Unemployment

Jobs declined rapidly following closure of the gasworks, docks and associated industries, and more recently in the early 1990s recession. The number of jobs fell by 30 per cent between 1992 and 1995. By 1996, 12 per cent of retail units were empty and 26 hectares of land vacant or underused (East-Docks SRB Partnership, 1996; Lupton, 1999a). Ward-level data available from 1996 show that both East-Docks and Newham as a whole have experienced falls in unemployment only slightly lower than the national average. However the unemployment in the area was falling from a much higher point, and at April 2000 Newham's unemployment rate of 11.7 per cent far exceeded the rate for England and Wales (3.8 per cent) (Lupton, forthcoming).

Routes through to the bus/tube station. There are few people walking here after dark

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Environment

Table 10 summarises different aspects of the environment of East-Docks. Its past history is now providing the framework for some large changes at its edges, with the redevelopment of the docks. Within the neighbourhood, there are both problems and strengths. The photographs help illustrate this. Table 11 shows the distribution of damaged cars by street and by type of damage. We found nearly four times as many damaged cars in East-Docks as in West-City.

There is still room for development of the waterside sites – either for more buildings or as public space. This has started alongside the nearby dock. The dockside and riverside location give the neighbourhood a lot of environmental as well as economic potential.

Table 10 Problems and strengths of the East-Docks environment

Problems	Strengths/potential
The main roads that surround and divide the neighbourhood mean that it is subject to heavy traffic and pollution. Newham Council estimated that 38,000 vehicles use the main trunk road every 24 hours (Aston Community Involvement Unit, 1996).	There are several large buildings which stand out, and which local people fought to save and convert to community use. These include the large converted church and the former town hall. There is also a family centre with its central garden square.
Most of the green spaces in the area are bare, lacking play equipment and imagination and some parents expressed concern about the lack of security.	The green spaces are quite large; large enough to make it possible to really enhance the facilities available to young people, and add to the overall appearance of the neighbourhood.
Dog muck can be a significant problem on pavements and grassland.	There are some small play areas on specific estates.
There are some derelict buildings, including boarded up shops and pubs (five pubs stood empty at the beginning of April 2000).	The dock-side is being developed both for housing, and for public access, with a paved waterfront.
The number of cars with smashed windscreens and windows, or crunched body-work is very noticeable. We counted the number of damaged cars in 20 streets (selected in advance of the count) in both of the neighbourhoods. We found nearly four times as many damaged cars in East-Docks as in West-City.	Many of the houses have front and back gardens.

Table 11 Noticeable damage to cars in 20 streets in West-City and East-Docks

	Smashed all over	Serious damage, e.g. smashed bumper, broken window, large dent	Flat tyre(s)	Other damage, e.g. moderate denting, damaged bumper, broken head-light	Total damaged cars
West-City					
Street 1	0	0	0	0	
Street 2	0	0	0	0	
Street 3	0	0	0	0	
Street 4	0	0	0	1	
Street 5	0	0	0	0	
Street 6	0	0	0	0	
Street 7	0	1	1	1	
Street 8	0	1	0	0	
Street 9	0	0	0	0	
Street 10	0	0	0	0	
Street 11	0	0	0	2	
Street 12	0	0	0	0	
Street 13	0	0	0	0	
Street 14	0	0	0	0	
Street 15	0	0	0	0	
Street 16	0	2	0	0	
Street 17	0	0	0	0	
Street 18	0	1	0	0	
Street 19	0	0	0	0	
Street 20	1	0	0	0	
Total	**1**	**5**	**1**	**4**	**11**
East-Docks					
Street 1	0	0	0	1	
Street 2	0	0	0	0	
Street 3	0	0	0	1	
Street 4	0	0	0	1	
Street 5	0	3	0	0	
Street 6	0	0	1	2	
Street 7	0	1	0	0	
Street 8	0	0	0	0	
Street 9	0	1	1	0	
Street 10	0	0	0	0	
Street 11	0	1	0	0	
Street 12	0	0	1	4	
Street 13	0	0	0	1	
Street 14	0	1	1	2	
Street 15	0	0	0	0	
Street 16	1	5 [1]	1	0	
Street 17	0	0	0	0	
Street 18	0	0	4	2	
Street 19	1	0	0	1	
Street 20	0	1	0	4	
Total	**2**	**13**	**9**	**19**	**43**

1 These five cars were parked in a small bay along this road and one was being worked on – perhaps an unofficial garage.

The main park in East-Docks

The main grass area north of the major road

The community project in the former town hall

SRB-funded improvements to
low-rise flats/maisonettes

What do families living in the area think?

As in West-City, I asked families what words they would choose to sum up their area, if they were describing it to someone who did not know it. Families living in and around East-Docks have a wide mixture of views about their area (see Table 12).

Table 12 The words families used to describe East-Docks and surrounding areas

A positive place
- A nice place.
- It's peaceful.
- Multi-racial.
- It's a good area.
- Busy, vibrancy, it's a nice area.
- Friendly. I feel as though as I can be myself: I don't have to wear Gucci clothes. I feel comfortable walking the streets.
- Peaceful. It is a good area.
- Quiet and easy.
- Very nice. Quite pleasant. It's alright.
- Good, clean, nice area to me.
- Quite a good environment to live in, very peaceful, very safe … there are no burglars.
- Quiet. Comfortable.
- It is good – 'within easy reach'.
- I like very much. First time I came to see this area, I like.

Friendly, community spirited
- Very community-based
- Very family-oriented. Close knit community for the people that originate from East-Docks.
- Quite friendly.
- Everyone's friendly.
- Neighbours are friendly.

A fairly good place
- OK. Not too bad.
- Quite good.
- Fair. Fairly good.
- East-Docks people make the best of what they've got.
- Quiet. Not a lot of community spirit on the general day-to-day. If something tragic happens, everyone is there for you. Which is good but sad because it's only if there's a tragedy.
- No trouble apart from the little kids.
- I've been here for many years and this Close is a bit better – everyone looks out for each other. I haven't heard about all the bad things happening here in the Close – things like people breaking into houses and clearing people out.
- No-one really interferes with anyone else. Not really a lot of vandalism. People here have domestics, but it's just amongst themselves.

A place with potential, improving
- Worth a try!
- There is potential in East-Docks.
- The good thing is a lot of improvement in the area.
- It's an up and coming area. Ten years ahead it's going to be so different – there's great changes going on.
- It has improved. Before, there was a lot of racism. Now that has gone down.
- Opportunities.

A changing environment
- Changing. Quite dynamic. Complex.
- Changing.
- Mixture of old and new, and old and new ways. It's becoming a bit cosmopolitan.

(Cont.)

Table 12 The words families used to describe East-Docks and surrounding areas (Cont.)

It's home
- It's OK to live here: I'm not giving much away, because people have to find out for themselves. Just because I don't like it, doesn't mean you wouldn't.
- I don't know about that one.
- I ain't got a clue. Everyone I know lives round here.

Broad negative comments
- The pits!
- Don't live in Newham! The whole of Newham really now is crap. It's changed over the years so much, it has lost all its reputation. We're losing all our history.
- Nobody likes to live here.
- Unsociable, boring, not family network.

Deprivation
- Individual families are quite poor.
- There's a tendency for lethargy among people, but that's no fault of their own.
- Very deprived, gloomy. It has lost its character.

Crime, insecurity, racism, drugs
- Drugs, crime, sad. It's just sad.
- It's turning into a rough area now. You're not safe round here.
- The bad thing is that racism is really high.
- A rough area.
- It's definitely nowhere to bring up a child. Drugs. Violence.
- A very untidy place. A lot of vandalism (they're always wrecking the bus stops – I don't know why they bother to put glass in there anymore). A drug zone – without a doubt. That's what scares me more than anything. I've seen pushers … that's everyday life round here. You can tell who takes drugs and what kind. The main ones are crack and heroin.
- Too much drinking – people who roam the streets drinking.

Poor environment, services and facilities
- Dirty, run-down.
- Dirty, busy (with traffic).
- I don't think Newham is one of the best places for educating your children.
- Not good for kids, have to go under subways to get your shopping, need a car to get to a supermarket.
- Boring! There's nothing for my age-group. The nearest club is in Ilford.

4 Characteristics of the families interviewed, and comparisons with the neighbourhood populations

We aimed to interview a mixture of families, broadly reflecting the characteristics of the neighbourhoods' populations. The key variables were:

- tenure
- ethnicity
- age of children
- marital and couple status
- income
- work status.

We achieved a reasonable mix of families in respect of these variables, despite the fact that our contact methods made targeting people with particular characteristics difficult. With multiple variables to represent and the small size of our sample, precise matching of the families with the neighbourhood populations was impossible. For example, by including the significant Turkish and Kurdish population living in the centre of our West-City neighbourhood, we reduced the proportion of lone parent families in our sample, as nearly all of these families were living in married couples. Table 13 compares the characteristics of the neighbourhoods, families interviewed, and local authority, regional and national averages.

It was sometimes a problem to obtain up-to-date information on the neighbourhoods' population characteristics. Both neighbourhoods are changing significantly and so this was a key concern. In West-City, the New Deal Trust's 10 per cent sample conducted in the summer of 1999 provided recent baseline statistics. In East-Docks, we had to rely on the 1991 Census, nearly 10 years out-of-date, for many figures. The up-to-date pupil ethnicity data from both local education authorities was extremely helpful.

Tenure and housing type

Both neighbourhoods are dominated by social renting, and the vast majority of our families also rented from the council or from housing associations. Of the seven East-Docks families who owned privately, five were living in former local authority property. Of the nine West-City owner-occupiers, seven were in ex-council properties.

Nearly all of the West-City families lived in flats or maisonettes, reflecting the fact that West-City primarily comprises flatted estates (see Table 14). The East-Docks families were mainly divided between terraced houses and flats or maisonettes.

Ethnicity

Table 15 gives a breakdown of the ethnicity of the children in our sample, comparing this with the local pupil data for January 1999. The advantage of using these figures is that they are up-to-date and, certainly in West-City, strongly consistent with the 10 per cent sample findings. Picking the schools to include was difficult in that schools in the area will serve some pupils from outside, and children who live in the area will attend schools outside the area. With this caveat, however, we feel it is the best available data source because of the length of time since the last census.

The West-City pupil data are derived from nine primary schools, with 1,958 pupils in total. There were large differences between schools. Twenty-nine per cent of pupils at one of the main primary schools used by our families were 'white European' (mainly Turkish and Kurdish according to the education department) compared with 0 per cent at one of the other main primary schools.

Table 14 Families' housing type (%)		
	West-City families	**East-Docks families**
House – detached	2	2
House – semi	2	2
House – terraced	4	32
Flat or maisonette – purpose built	86	64
Flat or maisonette – conversion	6	0
Total (= 100%)	50 families	50 families

Table 13 Characteristics of the neighbourhoods, families interviewed, and comparisons with local authority, regional and national averages[1] (all values expressed as percentages)

	West-City	50 West-City families	East-Docks	50 East-Docks families	Hackney	Newham	Inner London	Greater London	Great Britain[2]
Tenure									
% in social housing	82	72	75 (1996)[3]	78	59 (1991)	37 (1991)	43 (1991)	29 (1991)	23 (1993, E&W)
Ethnicity[4]									
Proportion of 'white' children (0–17)	32[5] (56%, 1991)[7]	64 (0–18)	61[6] (76%, 1991)[7]	34 (0–18)	54 (1991)	42 (1991)	59 (1991)	70 (1991)	91 (1991)
Lone parents									
Proportion of lone parent families (as a % of all families with dependent children)	42[8] (1991)	28	46[9] (1991)	62	41 (1991)	29 (1991)	37 (1991)	25 (1991)	19 (1991)
Proportion of lone parents working (full or part-time)	26	29	18[9] (1991)	47	29 (1991)	25 (1991)	30 (1991)	32 (1991)	35 (1991)
Work poverty									
Proportion of working age population not in work, study or training	39 (16+)	42 (18+)	42[9] (1991)	33 (18+)	36 (1991)	36 (1991)	30 (1991)	26 (1991)	25 (1991)

Sources: All West-City figures are based on the 1999 NDC 10 per cent sample, unless specified. East-Docks figures are based on the 1991 census for three wards, unless specified. The national tenure figure is from Malpass and Murie (1994). All other figures are based on the 1991 census.

1 All figures 99/00 unless specified.
2 Or England and Wales (E&W) where marked.
3 East-Docks Partnership, 1996.
4 The census category of 'white' includes Irish, Greek, Turkish and other European groups. (Karn, 1997.) We counted these groups separately. For the purposes of comparison, we included them in the white totals for the family sample shown in this table. A more detailed breakdown is shown in Table 15.
5 Derived from pupil ethnicity data for nine West-City primary schools.
6 Derived from pupil ethnicity data for five primary schools and two secondary schools.
7 Derived from the 1991 census. These figures represent the average for the wards that form the closest fit to the areas. See notes 8 and 9 below.
8 This figure represents the average for the four wards, parts of which are included within the area.
9 These figures are the average for the three neighbouring wards that represent the closest fit to the area.

Table 15 Pupil ethnicity data (1999) compared with our families and their children (%)

	White UK	White Euro[3], other	Black	Asian & SE Asian	Mixed race[4]	Other[4]	Declined	Total
West-City								
School population[1]	22	10	48	14	–	7	–	100
Children in our 50 families (98 children)	44	20	17	10	6	0	2	100
Our 50 families	36	28	20	4	8	2	2	100
East-Docks								
School population[2]	58	3	29	5	–	4	–	100
Children in our 50 families (111 children)	29	5	47	0	17	3	0	100
Our 50 families	34	8	46	0	10	2	0	100

Sources: Interviews with families and DfEE Form 7, January 1999, supplied by Hackney and Newham Local Education Authorities.

1 Derived from nine primary schools, with 1,958 pupils in total.

2 Derived from five primary schools and two secondary schools, with 3,444 pupils in total.

3 Mainly Turkish and Kurdish. 'White Euro' is a DfEE term. Our families identified their ethnicity more specifically.

4 The DfEE does not have a separate term 'mixed race', and Hackney education department reported that most mixed race families choose the 'other' category.

The East-Docks pupil data are derived from five primary and two secondary schools, with 3,444 pupils in total. Again, there were some large differences between individual schools. For example, 53 per cent of pupils at one of the primary schools were Black African compared with 19 per cent at another.

In West-City, black children were significantly under-represented in our sample compared with the ethnic composition of the neighbourhoods' pupil populations. Conversely, in East-Docks white children were significantly under-represented in our sample. We made specific efforts to include Turkish and Kurdish families in West-City because of their significant presence in part of this neighbourhood (shown in the pupil population at one primary school), and this is reflected in the final composition of our sample.

Looking at the ethnicity of the families as a whole, rather than the individual children, shows a less significant difference, with 36 per cent of the West-City families and 34 per cent of the East-Docks families being white-UK. In East-Docks, this is partly explained by the slightly smaller family size of the white-UK families we interviewed, and in West-City by the slightly larger family size of the white-UK families we interviewed.

Table 16 Age of children in the families (% of 18s and under)

Age	West-City families	East-Docks families
1 and under	19	12
2–4	22	18
5–7	19	19
8–10	14	20
11–13	15	16
14–16	6	10
17 or 18	3	5
Total (= 100%)	98 children	111 children

Age of children

There was a wide age range of children in our sample, covering the key transition stages of pre-school, primary, secondary and school-leaving. Around a fifth of the children in our West-City families, and a tenth of children in our East-Docks families reached their first or second birthdays during the year 2000, so we have a significant number of 'millennium tots'. Table 16 shows the spread.

Marital and couple status, and family composition

We were keen to include a mixture of one and two parent families. We asked about both marital status and couple status, to ensure that we included cohabiting couples as well (see Tables 17 and 18). In West-City, only 28 per cent of our families had a lone parent, compared with around two fifths of families in the area as a whole. By contrast, 62 per cent of our East-Docks families had a lone parent. A much higher proportion of our East-Docks lone parents were in part-time or full-time work (47 per cent) compared with just 18 per cent of lone parents in the area as a whole, and 29 per cent of our West-City lone parents. We will explore the issue of work further in the next round of interviews.

We talk about 'lone' parents, but five of the lone parents interviewed were living with one or two of *their* parents, and so were not the only adult living in the home. In addition to three-generation families, other families

included other relatives beyond the 'nuclear family' of parent and child: some were looking after their siblings' children, and sometimes a brother-in-law was living with them.

In all, I interviewed two three-generation families in West-City, and four three-generation families in East-Docks. A further two families included a brother-in-law, and two other families included nephews or nieces. Overall, 10 per cent of the total sample comprised such non-nuclear families. Furthermore, six families (in addition to the three-generation families) had adult children (i.e. those over 18) who were still living at home. Two families had some children under 18 who were not living at home. They were either in care or being looked after by a relative.

Income

The extent of benefits receipt is a useful way of considering the mix of income levels amongst the families. Just over half of our families in both areas were in receipt of benefits other than child benefit (see Table 19). One of the West-City families received incapacity benefit. All the other families receiving benefits were receiving means-tested ones. Fourteen per cent of the East-Docks families and 10 per cent of the West-City families were in receipt of in-work benefits, an indicator of low wages.

Table 17 Marital status of our families (%)

	West-City families	East-Docks families
Married and living with spouse	52	28
Single (never married)	40	38
Married and separated from spouse	6	14
Divorced	2	18
Widowed	0	2
Total (=100%)	50 families	50 families

Table 18 Current 'couple status' of our families (%)

	West-City families	East-Docks families
Married couple	52	28
Unmarried couple	20	10
Not living in couple	28	62
Total (= 100%)	50 families	50 families

Table 19 The proportion of families receiving benefits (%)

	West-City families	East-Docks families
No benefits, other than child benefit	44	44
Out-of-work benefits	44	38
In-work benefits	10 [1]	14
No income at all	0	2
Not recorded	2	2
Total (= 100%)	**50 families**	**50 families**

1 Including one family receiving incapacity benefit as well as another household member's earnings. In all, 52 per cent of the West-City families were in receipt of a means-tested benefit. Fifty-nine per cent of the families in the New Deal for Communities 10 per cent sample in this area were in receipt of income support or housing benefit.

Work status

Thirty-three per cent of adults in our East-Docks sample and 42 per cent in our West-City sample were not in work or full-time study or training. Although the interviews were usually conducted with one parent, I recorded basic employment details for everyone in the household (see Table 20). Our 100 families included 171 adults (aged 18 years and over).

Of those who were working (including 16-year-olds and over), 74 per cent in East-Docks and 69 per cent in West-City were working full-time. In both areas, the commonest form of employment was in the personal and protective service occupations, which includes jobs relating to childcare, educational assistance, caretaking, catering and security amongst other things.

Length of residence in the neighbourhoods

Around a half of the families had lived in their neighbourhoods for ten years or less. Ten per cent of our West-City families had lived there for under two years compared with 8 per cent nationally and just 4 per cent in East-Docks (Hedges and Clemens, 1994). Twenty-eight per cent in East-Docks and 22 per cent in West-City had lived in these neighbourhoods for 21 years or more/all their life. This is substantially less than the national average of 51 per cent having lived in their area for 20

Table 20 Standard occupational classification of the working adults in our families (%)

	West-City[1]	East-Docks[2]
Managers and administrators	4	2
Professional occupations	10	9
Associate professional and technical occupations	6	9
Clerical and secretarial occupations	21	13
Craft and related occupations	10	15
Personal and protective service occupations[3]	27	31
Sales occupations	2	2
Plant and machine operatives	8	9
Other occupations	6	7
Not recorded	2	0
Declined to answer	2	2
Total (= 100%)	**48 workers**	**53 workers**

1 Total of 48 current workers in our sample, of whom 29 were men and 19 were women.

2 Total of 53 current workers in our sample, of whom 24 were men and 29 were women.

3 Personal and protective service occupations include jobs relating to childcare, educational assistance, caretaking, catering, security and other tasks.

years or more/all their life (Hedges and Clemens, 1994). Figure 5 shows the variation in length of residence.

Length of residence was correlated to some extent with ethnicity, with more white interviewees in both areas having lived there for their whole lives (see Table 21). There were, however, black interviewees who had lived in the area for their whole lives too.

Movement

Almost three quarters of the families in both neighbourhoods had had three or fewer addresses in the

past ten years (including their current address), i.e. two moves (see Figure 6). Around a half of the families had had just two addresses, i.e. one move. However, a small number had had a large number of addresses: 14 per cent had had five or more. This was usually because the interviewee had previously been living a 'single' life and living in short-term temporary accommodation or travelling before having children, or because families had been homeless and had lived at various temporary addresses including bed and breakfast or hostel type accommodation. It was sometimes as a result of settling in England for the first time.
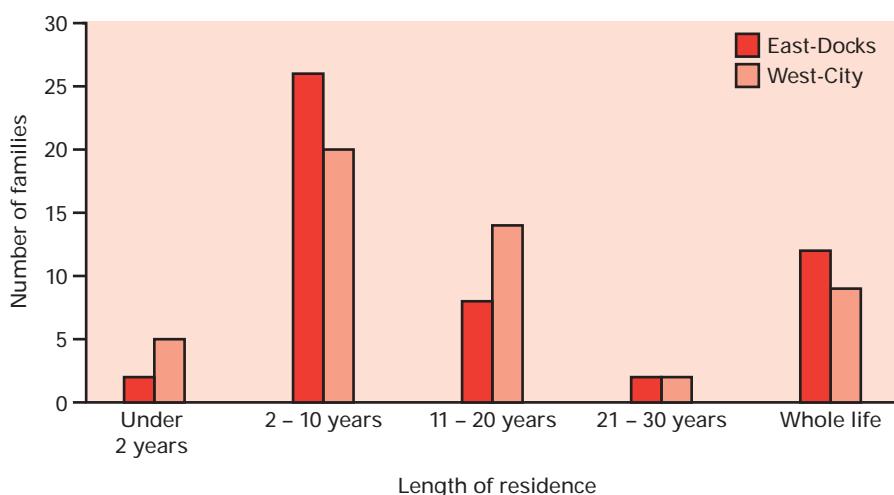

Figure 5 Length of residence in the neighbourhoods

Table 21 Length of residence in neighbourhood compared with household ethnicity[1] (number of families)

	West-City families[2]				East-Docks families			
Length of residence in neighbourhood	White UK	Euro, other[1]	Black & Asian	Mixed black/ white	White UK	Euro, other[1]	Black & Asian	Mixed black/ white
Under 2 years	0	3	2	0	0	1	1	0
2–10 years	5	8	4	3	5	1	17	3
11–20 years	4	4	5	0	4	1	2	1
21–30 years	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Whole life	7	0	1	1	8	1	2	1
Total number of families	**18**	**15**	**12**	**4**	**17**	**4**	**24**	**5**

1 We have made a basic split for the purposes of clear presentation of the information. 'Euro, others' includes Irish, Turkish, Kurdish, Eastern European, mixed white UK/white other.
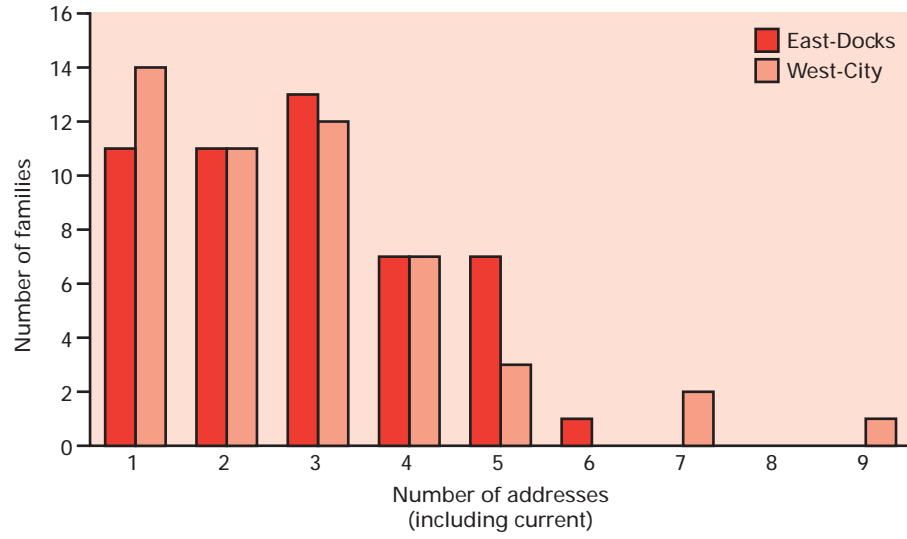2 One family declined to answer the question about ethnicity.

Figure 6 Number of addresses in the past ten years

This chapter presents the feedback the families gave about different aspects of their areas. I have quantified the families' responses throughout to present the evidence as clearly as possible, to give a picture of their experience of the areas. Wherever possible, I have extracted the responses of families from other households in the national survey samples, to enable more direct comparison. (The views of older people can differ from those of families with dependent children on some things, such as desire to move.) Whenever I talk about 'East-Docks families' or 'West-City families', I am never referring to more than 50 families in each. One hundred families give a good idea of how the areas affect family life, but it is clearly only a partial picture.

Satisfaction with the neighbourhoods

Around 60 per cent of the families in both neighbourhoods were very or fairly satisfied with their area, compared with 83 per cent nationally (Survey of English Housing, 1997/98). When considering the areas as a place to bring up children, satisfaction levels fell to 46 per cent in East-Docks and 36 per cent in West-City. Families frequently mentioned concerns about negative peer pressure, safety, drugs, pollution, lack of facilities and paedophiles.

Sixty per cent of the West-City families were very or fairly satisfied with their accommodation, compared with a much higher proportion, 74 per cent, in East-Docks, and

87 per cent nationally (Survey of English Housing, 1997/98). Families living in flats often described the difficulties they encountered in bringing children up without their own outside space. The vast majority of West-City families were living in flats or maisonettes, which largely explains the higher dissatisfaction with accommodation there. Fewer than 10 per cent of the families in both areas who were living in houses were dissatisfied with their accommodation, whereas nearly 40 per cent of the families living in purpose built flats/maisonettes were slightly or very dissatisfied. Figures 7–9 and Table 22 show the satisfaction levels in both neighbourhoods.

Table 22 Families' satisfaction with their area and their accommodation (%)

	West-City families[1]	East-Docks families[1]	Families in 7 SRB areas, before regeneration started[2,4]	England families[3,4]
Very/fairly satisfied with area (%)	60	64	64	83
Very/fairly satisfied with accommodation (%)	60	74	70	87
Total (= 100%)	50 families	50 families		

Sources:

1 Interviews.

2 MORI survey for the DETR (96/97). SRB stands for 'single regeneration budget'. The Appendix lists the SRB areas and their profiles.

3 Survey of English Housing (97/98).

4 These figures are for households with dependent children – extracted from the total samples for the purposes of comparison with our families.
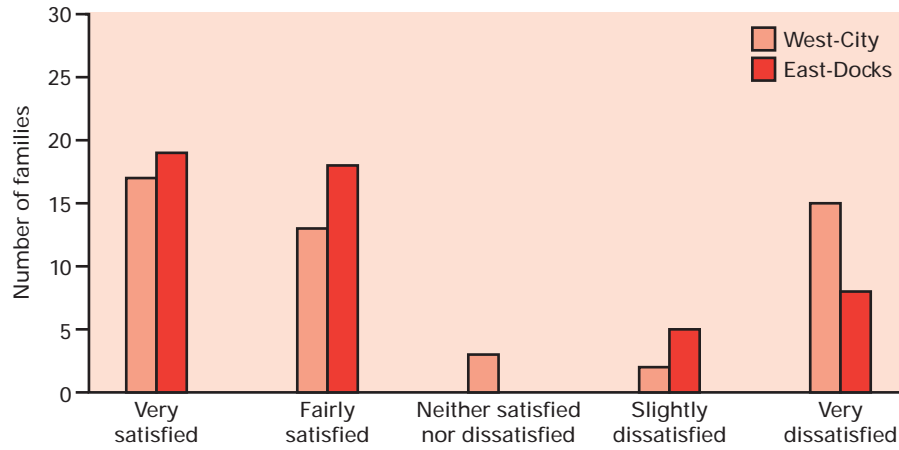
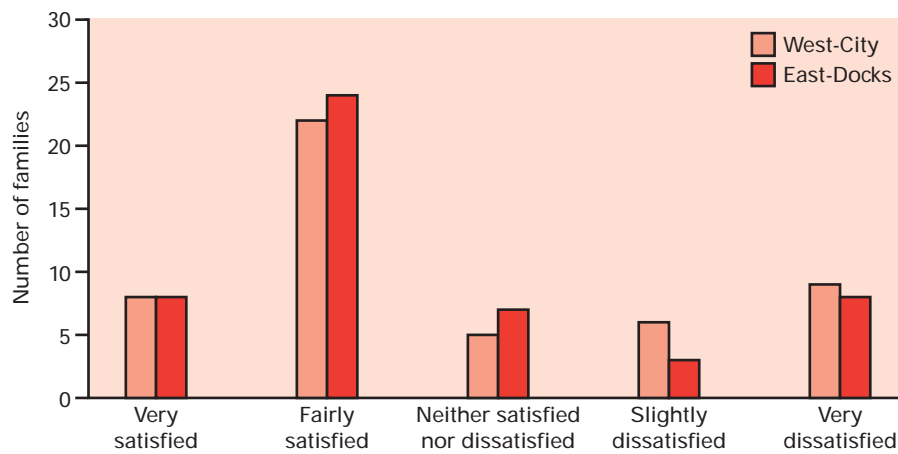**Figure 7 Families' satisfaction with their accommodation**

Figure 8 Families' satisfaction with their neighbourhood
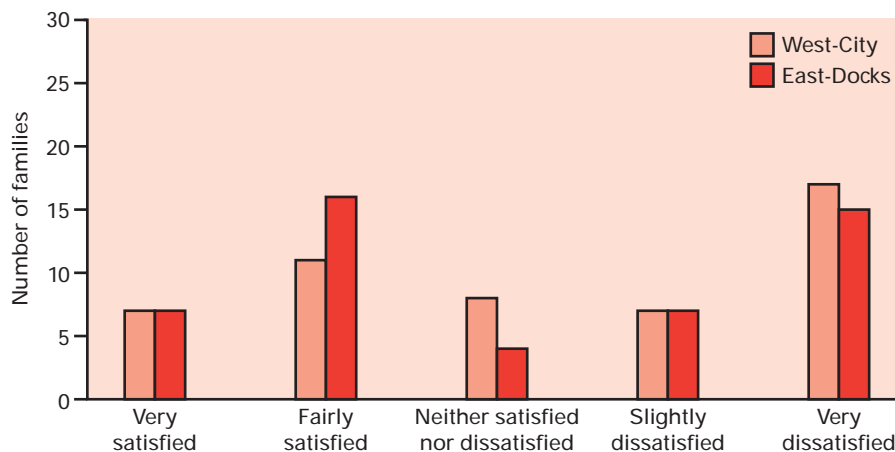

Figure 9 Families' satisfaction with their neighbourhood as a place to bring up children

Table 23 Families' movement aspirations (%)

	West-City families[1]	East-Docks families[1]	Families in 7 SRB areas[2]
Want to move	66	66	46
Out of area	42	36	28
In area	24	30	14
			4 (don't know)
Don't want to move	32	30	52
Don't know	2	4	2
Total (= 100%)	50 families	50 families	

Sources:
1 Interviews.
2 MORI survey for the DETR (96/97). The MORI figure shown is for families with dependent children. The figure for the total MORI sample was only 35 per cent wanting to move – older people are less likely to want to move.

Families' desire to move

A significant proportion of families wanted to move; two thirds in both areas. Table 23 shows that a significant minority of families, a quarter in West-City and almost a third in East-Docks, ideally wanted to move within the area. This was usually because they wanted bigger accommodation or a garden, or to move from a flat to a house.

Some families wanted to stay in their neighbourhoods for the time being, but could see a time in the future when they would want to move out, for example when their children reached secondary-school age, or when they wanted a bigger place to live. Particularly in West-City, people referred to the very high property prices in the area, which meant that they could not afford to buy larger accommodation or to buy a house with a garden.

Of those families who wanted to move out of the area now, most wanted to move for 'area related' reasons (see Table 24).

In West-City, the main area-related reason concerned the prevalence of drugs and crime, and feeling unsafe.

You've just got to be on guard all the time. With gates on your doors, it's like you're in prison.

Drugs is everywhere, but it's so in-your-face round here.

A summary of the various area-related reasons given in West-City is presented in Table 25.

In East-Docks, families also gave a mixture of area-related reasons (see Table 26). A relatively large number (six families) wanted to move out because of poor institutions and services. All but one of these families were concerned specifically with the quality of education, especially at secondary level. The other family mentioned the poor shopping centre and the lack of help from the council in finding them bigger accommodation.

The 'personal reasons' in both areas included wanting to be near family who were already living away from the neighbourhood, needing to escape domestic violence, and for a 'fresh start'.

Table 24 Main reason for wanting to move (number of families, of those who wanted to move out of the area)

	West-City families	East-Docks families
Area related	18	15
Property related	1	0
Personal reasons	2	3
Total wanting to move out of area	21	18

Table 25 Breakdown of area-related reasons for wanting to move out of West-City

Area-related reason	Number of families
Drugs/crime/fear/insecurity	8
Want a better environment, more space, privacy, greenery, places for children to play	3
Institutions/services	2
Hackney is very poverty stricken	2
Noise and dirt	2
Just hate the area	1
Total	**18**

Table 26 Breakdown of area-related reasons for wanting to move out of East-Docks

Area-related reason	Number of families
Institutions/services	6
White families feeling 'racially outcast'	3
Crime, roughness and noisiness – 'Unless you're a very strong person, it infringes on you'	2
To go to an area with a better environment, less pollution, more greenery, more space	2
Black family wanting to escape racism	1
Just don't like the area	1
Total	**15**

Community spirit

Around half the families in both neighbourhoods felt that there was a lot of community spirit in their area (see Table 27). This question often prompted a discussion of what community spirit was. Black and ethnic minority residents sometimes pointed to a distinction between whether community spirit existed in their own ethnic and/or religious communities and whether it existed more generally among residents in the area.

An extremely high proportion of families felt that community spirit mattered (see Table 28). There was a large gap between people feeling that community spirit existed, and feeling that it mattered, suggesting significant unmet need. This gap was much larger than the national average (Hedges and Clemens, 1994).

Table 27 Whether the area has a lot of community spirit (%)

	West-City families[1]	East-Docks families[1]	England families (97/98)[2]
Yes	54	48	48[3]
No	30	34	52
Can't say	12	14	–
Not recorded	4	4	–
Total (= 100%)	**50 families**	**50 families**	

Sources:
1 Interviews.
2 Survey of English Housing (97/98) in respect of households with dependent children.
3 Hedges and Clemens report that the Housing Attitudes Survey undertaken in England in 1994 found variation by degree of urbanisation. The proportion of the total sample (not just families) saying there was community spirit was 41 per cent in urban and city areas, 42 per cent in suburban areas, 66 per cent in rural villages and 48 per cent in other parts of rural areas.

Table 28 Whether community spirit matters (%) (whether community spirit exists in brackets)

	West-City families[1]	East-Docks families[1]	England (94)[2]
Yes	70 (54)	72 (48)	57 (46)
No	20	14	–
Can't say	2	10	–
Not recorded	8	4	–
Total (= 100%)	50 families	50 families	

Sources:

1 Interviews.

2 Hedges and Clemens (1994), all households. There was some variation by age. The 25–54 year age bands were most concerned (60 per cent). We were not able to obtain figures for families only.

Around a half of the families had relatives other than those in their household living in the neighbourhood. This is lower than the national average. In subsequent rounds of interviews we intend to explore this further and ask people where their relatives do live. Some people had relatives quite nearby – in other parts of East London for example – and this is very different from having relatives in other parts of the country altogether. We intend to ask some more detailed questions about the frequency of contact with different relatives, to compare with the classic study of kinship in Bethnal Green, East London in the 1950s (Young and Willmott, 1959).

Of those who did have relatives living nearby (Table 29), 73 per cent in West-City and 64 per cent in East-Docks said it was important to stay living close to them, compared with 66 per cent nationally (Survey of English Housing, 1997/98).

I also asked families whether they knew many people in the area. The answers in East-Docks were similar to national averages (see Table 30). In West-City, people were more likely to know a lot of people.

As well as kinship and friendship networks, most of the families (40 in West-City and 45 in East-Docks) were linked into their local communities through schools, churches, voluntary projects and adult education classes. One-parent families were more 'linked in' via these routes than two-parent families.

Involvement ranged from: being employed locally; to taking on a responsible role such as school governor or playgroup management committee member; to regularly helping out with their children's activities; to using a service such as a support network for carers of young children; to occasionally attending tenants' association meetings. Table 31 shows these varied linkages.

Of course, there are other ways in which people may be linked in – attending school activities, talking to other parents at the school gate, chatting with neighbours, going to leisure centres, sending their children to Brownies, after-school clubs – which are not shown here.

Table 29 Whether people have relatives living in the area (%) (whether important to stay living close in brackets)

	West-City families[1]	East-Docks families[1]	England families[2] (97/98)
Yes	52[3] (73)	50 (64)	60 (66)
No	46	50	40
Not recorded	2	0	–
Total (= 100%)	50 families	50 families	

Sources:

1 Interviews.

2 Survey of English Housing (1997/98) in respect of households with dependent children.

3 The New Deal Trust's 10 per cent survey found that only 38 per cent of their sample had relatives living in the area. White respondents were significantly more likely to have relatives in the area than others (44 per cent). Our results did not show such a clear correlation with ethnicity, but our sample was much smaller.

Table 30 Whether you know many people in the area (%)

	West-City families[1]	East-Docks families[1]	England (94)[2]
A lot	60	54	54
A few	32	36	36
Hardly any	4	10	9
None	2	0	1
Not recorded	2	0	0
Total (= 100%)	50 families	50 families	

Sources:
1 Interviews.
2 Hedges and Clemens (1994). The England figures are for the total sample; we were not able to obtain figures for families only.

Table 31 Links between families and the neighbourhoods

	West-City families		East-Docks families	
	One-parent	Two-parent	One-parent	Two-parent
Employed locally[1]	5	10	7	9
Responsible voluntary role	2	8	6	4
Attending an 'adult education' course such as basic skills, computers, or postgraduate study	2	5	15	3
Regularly help with school/other children's activities	5	9	10	7
Regularly attend local group such as family support group, Tenants' Association	8	15	8	2
Occasionally attend local group	3	0	0	1
Attend church or other religious institution	5	10	14	8
Total number of families linked in[2]	12	28	30	15
% of our sample	86	78	97	79

1 This is likely to be a slight under-estimate because place of work was not a specific question in the interview.
2 The total number of families is less than the number of linkages because families were often involved in several different activities.

Almost a third of our families had a family member employed locally: 15 in West-City and 16 in East-Docks. These local jobs included: childminders; foster-carers; caretakers; sales assistants; tutors; working within a school as a classroom assistant, mid-day supervisor, or administrator; or being employed in a religious institution.

It is possible that our families were more strongly linked than others to schools, churches and community organisations because 56 per cent were recruited directly from these sources. Over a half of our families were however in receipt of some form of benefit. A high proportion of the adults in our sample were not in work, full-time study or training: 33 per cent in East-Docks and 42 per cent in West-City. Our evidence clearly

demonstrates that many of these families are 'linked-in' in low-income areas.

Neighbourhood change

I asked families how they thought their areas were changing overall and the results were striking (see Table 32). Just over a half of the West-City families and 44 per cent of East-Docks families felt their area was improving. Only 16 per cent of families in typical deprived areas targeted for government programmes, and 10 per cent of families nationally, felt their area had improved in the previous two years (MORI survey for the DETR, 96/97; SEH, 95/96). In the neighbourhoods we are studying, these improvements are only just starting and we do not

Table 32 Views of area change (%)

	West-City families[1]	East-Docks families[1]	Families in 7 SRB areas, before regeneration started[2,4]	Families nationally[3,4]
Getting better	52	44	16	10
Staying the same	26	24	50	54
Getting worse	10	20	27	28
Better in some ways, worse in others	6	8	–	–
Not recorded	6	4	–	–
Total (= 100%)	50 families	50 families		

Sources:
1 Interviews.
2 MORI survey for the DETR (96/97).
3 SEH (95/96).
4 The MORI and SEH figures represent how families with dependent children felt their area had changed in the previous two years. A further 8 per cent of families nationally had lived in the area less than two years and so were not asked this question.

know whether they will continue. However, the level of optimism among the families about physical improvements in particular is striking. A small number of families in both areas described how their area was getting better in some ways (usually in terms of physical improvements) but worse in other ways (usually in terms of social problems such as crime and the behaviour of children).

No-one who had been living in either neighbourhood for under two years thought their area was getting worse. People who had been living in the neighbourhoods for more than 21 years and/or their whole lives were much less likely to think their area was getting better. Table 33 shows this. Otherwise, there was no consistent pattern: in West-City, people who had lived there for 11–20 years were more likely to feel it was improving. Whereas in East-Docks it was people who had lived there for 2–10 years who were most likely to feel it was getting better.

The ways in which West-City is changing

The main ways in which people felt West-City was getting better were physical improvements, services and community facilities. School performance is discussed separately below. People here were more likely than in East-Docks to point out that many blocks of flats were yet to be improved, and they had mixed feelings about the commercial boom going on. People welcomed the new shops setting up, but sometimes felt that the increase in cafés had gone too far! They talked about the rocketing cost of property and the money pouring into the area, but some expressed reservations about whether this would actually benefit local people.

The new building is symptomatic of increasing investment in the area which can only be good. A lot of housing has been improved – even if it is just a lick of paint. I think it's still largely a dependency culture, but that could change too.

Table 33 Views of area change by time in neighbourhood – both neighbourhoods (100 families)

	Time in neighbourhood (years)			
View of area change (% within time in neighbourhood)	Under 2	2–10	11–20	21–30/ whole life
Getting better	57	52	64	24
Staying the same	29	26	18	28
Getting worse	0	9	14	32
Better in some ways, worse in others	0	4	5	16
Not recorded	14	7	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100

West-City is becoming trendy. There's more money coming into the area. It's encouraging that people are getting their own businesses in West-City. I don't like the fact that people are trying to open up discos, but I think the area is progressing.

In terms of services, and community facilities, several people felt the new community college had provided a big 'uplift'. The college offers GCSE, A-level and Access courses, and programmes of study leading to a wide range of vocational qualifications. Other improvements identified were: the revamped furniture museum; the new library (though others criticised the loss of their more local libraries); a new community centre; a new doctors' surgery; the leisure centre; more playgroups; filming in the area, seeing famous people around; and a better cleaning service in one block.

They are trying in Hackney. Housing things seem to get done quicker these days, since [the private housing management contractor] took over.

Another key change identified and talked about positively, negatively and neutrally, was the changing ethnic composition of the area. This is discussed separately below.

The main way in which people thought the area was getting worse was in terms of crime and drugs. Some people felt that noise had increased, that the area was more overcrowded and that there was more traffic.

The ways in which East-Docks is changing

In East-Docks, the main positive changes identified also concerned physical improvements, community facilities, and the regeneration efforts underway.

Physical improvements included: new construction of housing (often replacing unpopular tower blocks); some modernisation of existing housing; renovation of the market; new schools; a community centre; train stations; city airport; the nearby Dome; an exhibition centre; university campus; and a pedestrian bridge.

The whole place is looking good – and very soon it will look great!

The place is brightening up.

East-Docks is looking up – it's shaping up – it's changing its image.

Several people talked about the new job opportunities that all these new developments should bring. Other families had mixed feelings about private housing developments and some felt the Dome had been a waste of money.

The improved community facilities mentioned included one project establishing itself in the once derelict town hall and providing a range of activities, services and advice for children and adults, the establishment of a new youth project, and an increase in adult education opportunities. But a note of caution should be sounded; in other parts of the interviews, many people talked about the lack of facilities for children and how these had diminished since they were young.

People commented on the extra money being put into the area, both through regeneration and through commerce, with new shops and businesses.

They're putting money into the area – hopefully some permanent good will come of it.

As in West-City, many people noted the changing ethnic composition of the area, discussed below.

The people who felt the area was getting worse talked mainly about the changing attitudes of children and their lack of respect for adults, worsening problems with crime and drugs, and loss of community spirit.

Race and the changing ethnic composition of the neighbourhoods

We did not ask people directly about race, but a majority (28 families in each area) raised the subject at various points in the interview. People mentioned it in answer to questions about what they liked or disliked about the neighbourhood, their reasons for moving, the image of the neighbourhood, neighbourhood change, schools, and potential obstacles to their children as they grew up. In all there were 64 different comments of which 33 were positive or neutral; 26 were negative in relation to the areas. There were a further five comments about the barriers of racism more generally. The neutral comments were important because they explained people's views without any negative interpretation implied on the subject of race relations. For this reason we included these comments with more directly positive comments.

Table 34 attempts to capture all the points that people raised. This only records the views of families who raised the issue: other families might have had views on each of

these matters. We will follow this up in the second round of interviews.

In East-Docks, a lot of people referred to its racist image, but said that was in the past, and the area had moved on.

I have heard that before, most people were racist ... maybe 15 or 20 years ago. There's nothing like that anymore. They said before they would never let the *coloured people live in the area. But now everyone knows that we have to live together.* (Black African family, East-Docks)

However, a few families in both areas talked about how they had either witnessed or directly experienced racism, including attacks on their home or car.

I'm stuck here in fear. (Black African family, East-Docks)

Table 34 Summary of families' comments about race (number of families, of those who raised the subject)[1,2]

	West-City families				East-Docks families				
	White UK	Euro, other	Black, Asian	Mixed	White UK	Euro, other	Black, Asian	Mixed	Total
Total 'positive' comments	5	1	3	–	3	1	11	–	24
Refuting racist image of their neighbourhood as it is today, or describing reduction in racism	1	–	–	–	1	–	6	–	
Other positive comments, e.g. that it is great for children to grow up in a multi-cultural community	4	1	3	–	2	1	5	–	
Total 'neutral' comments (i.e. solely descriptive of the change)	5	1	–	–	2	–	1	–	9
Total 'negative' comments	4	4	3	1	4	3	6	1	26
Did not like fact of an increasing black and ethnic minority population overall, or of one specific ethnic group, or felt they received more favourable housing allocations	2	–	1	1	4	1	1	1	
Felt black people discriminated against in housing allocations	–	–	1	–	–	–	1	–	
Had seen or experienced racism/ hostility from white people	–	2	–	–	–	1	2	–	
Had experienced 'racism' from other black people	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	
Felt black people pushed into area	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	
Clash between different cultures, underlying tension	1	1	–	–	–	1	–	–	
Worried about non-English speaking pupils holding the others up	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	
Felt Christian schools excluding Muslims/other school not promoting a cultural upbringing	–	1	1	–	–	–	–	–	
Concern about racism in society generally (not area-specific)	–	1	2	–	–	–	2	–	5

1 A small number of families made several different points and so the numbers in this table add up to slightly more than 28 in each neighbourhood. For example, one liked the multi-cultural aspect of East-Docks but was concerned about racism in society generally.

2 We have broken the responses down into these broad categories for the purposes of clear presentation of the findings. However, a more detailed breakdown of the black and ethnic minority composition of our families is given in Table 15.

In East-Docks, a number of white families talked about feeling 'outcast'.

> *I feel very outcast – racially outcast – most of the time. Because of that I want to move out of London. You're scared to say anything. If your kids have a feud with someone and they're not white it ends up being racially motivated, but it shouldn't be.* (White family, East-Docks)

A few families were upset that housing allocations appeared to favour people who were newly arrived in the areas, when they themselves could not get the transfer they were hoping for to keep their family together, having lived in the area all their lives.

> *We know that people have got to be housed somewhere, but we will never get another offer from Hackney Council. We haven't got a hope in hell of moving to West-City Road [where both sets of parents live]. They will never move us ... Everyone gets separated and moved away.* (White family, West-City)

Many people were positive about the ethnic diversity of the neighbourhoods.

> *The good thing is that my children are being brought up with a lot of different ethnic minorities.* (White family, West-City)

> *I like the friendliness. The people are more down-to-earth – maybe because it's a mixed population. Asians and Africans. White people who live here tend to accept us more-or-less. It's becoming like a melting pot. I haven't experienced racism. It's safer than places where racism is more outspoken.* (Black African family, East-Docks)

Changing education

I asked specific questions about the schools, including whether parents thought their children's schools were getting better, staying the same, or getting worse (see Table 35). Most people thought that both primary and secondary schools were getting better. They often cautioned that there was still room for improvement and that the schools had started from a low base, but they welcomed the changes.

The improvements identified included a mixture of the following: new head teachers (sometimes brought in as 'trouble-shooters'); being part of Newham's Education Action Zone; the introduction of homework; good publicity in local newspapers or leaflets; after-school and holiday clubs; the introduction of uniform; improvements to the physical school building; new computers; improvement in academic results; expulsion of bullies; and increasing sensitivity to the needs of the Turkish/Kurdish population including translation of documents.

Table 35 How parents thought their children's schools were changing overall (number of families)

	Primary schools[1]		Secondary schools[2]	
	West-City	East-Docks	West-City	East-Docks
Getting better	12	21	6	6
Staying the same	5	2	1	1
Getting worse	3	1	0	2
Not recorded[3]	7	15	2	7
Total number of families	**27**	**39**	**9**	**16**

1 Includes all families who sent their children to primary schools within the boroughs of Hackney or Newham. Three West-City families sent their children to other state primary schools out of the borough. One East-Docks family sent their children to a state primary school out of the borough.
2 Incudes families who sent their children to secondary schools in the boroughs, or to those secondary schools just over the Hackney boundary in Islington that are commonly used by families in the area. In West-City, two of the families had children at a private school and four other families had children at other state schools out of the borough. In East-Docks, one family had a child at a private school, and two others sent their children to another state school out of the borough.
3 Often because their child had only just started at the school and so it was too soon to say.

One parent said of a newly built primary school in Newham:

You can tell it's going to be excellent – you can tell from the head teacher. There's no doubt in a million years that it's going to be excellent!

Another said of a secondary school that had just been included in Newham's Education Action Zone and was due to have a new head:

The future there can only be brighter.

One parent said of a Hackney primary school:

The headmaster is more for the school, the kids and the parents. He has done a lot to turn this school around – bring it up from the bottom. He has brought funding in. He always makes time for you if you have a problem.

Equally, staffing changes can bring about negative shifts:

If you've got a good teacher in a school, then the school's got a reputation. But if the goodness goes out of the school then it becomes nothing. And I think the teachers that are there now are too young. The kids are over-powering them. (Parent of secondary-age child, East-Docks)

The interviews highlighted parents' perspectives of the different influences on their child's educational experience: the child's own abilities and individual personality; the characteristics of peers; the individual class teacher; the head's leadership; and the overall institution of the school to which clear feelings and reputation could be attached. Parents often distinguished between their own personal satisfaction with a school, and the way they knew outsiders perceived it.

Homework

All of the secondary schools and most of the primary schools used by the families sent some work home, in addition to reading. Most parents helped with this, and were pleased their children were getting homework. Many parents were struggling, particularly with maths, and with secondary subjects. A recent nation-wide survey found that one in two parents regularly 'got stuck' when trying to help with homework, so the parents in our families are not alone (*The Guardian*, 27 March 2000).

In fact fewer than one in two of the parents in our sample were struggling (see Table 36), but this is explained by the fact that a majority have primary-age children. It is secondary subjects that present most difficulties. Parents are likely to encounter more problems as time goes on and their children enter secondary education.

The results for both areas were very similar: around 40 per cent of parents of either primary- or secondary-aged children experienced some problems in helping with homework. Parents were keen, but sometimes struggled to follow what their children were doing, or to find the necessary time. They were concerned that things had changed since they were at school. Furthermore, language could be a problem:

His Dad is busy and my English is not enough. And I haven't got enough time as well. (Mum of primary-age children)

Table 36 Parents' experience of helping with homework (number of families)[1]

	West-City families		East-Docks families		Total		Combined
	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	total
Sometimes 'baffled', finds some homework hard, maths is difficult, other problems	9	6	10	7	19	13	32
Usually no problem, very confident	14	5	17	6	31	11	42
Other – school doesn't give homework, child always goes to homework club, parent rarely helps	4	0	4	2	8	2	10

1 Several families had children at both primary and secondary levels, and so are included twice. Six families with school-age children were not asked this question, due to lack of time.

Some of the things are very hard. I don't know what to do. Some of the things, she knows more than me. It really has changed from when I went to school. (Mum of primary-age child)

What I don't like is reading out loud. [And I won't be very confident] especially when she gets older and has to be doing things like spelling … because mine is not very good. And maths – because that wasn't my strong point. If she brings fractions home, it will be 'oh gawd'. (Mum of primary-age child)

I won't say very confident, because I don't know the secondary syllabus. Some of the stuff is as confusing to me as it would be for any mum. Some of the computer stuff is so advanced. (Qualified teacher and mum of secondary-age children)

Many parents were trying to keep up, sometimes even checking with the school.

It's fine giving the homework, but what knowledge do the parents have to actually go through the work with their child? I have an OK education – and still with the maths, it's like 'hang on, let me think about this'. I had to go to the school to ask the teacher is this the way you're teaching her, or shall I teach the way I know how? (Mum of primary-age children)

Some parents actively enjoyed learning alongside their children.

Now the government are going to introduce homework for the parents. I think that's good. You can never have too much education, savvy, knowledge. Things are changing all the time, and it's nice to be kept up-to-date with the kids and what is going on in the schools. And you don't lose your kids as they go to secondary school if you're working along with them. (Mum of primary- and secondary-age children)

I left school very young and went right back in from the bottom when my son was five. It makes me want to work with him. (Mum of secondary-age child, now a graduate)

Changing childhoods: diminishing freedom and increasing fear

I asked parents what differences they saw between their own childhood, and the way in which their children were growing up. I recorded their perceptions; I was not able to measure actual changes. The vast majority of families in both neighbourhoods felt their children had less freedom to play outside because dangers had increased. This was the case for parents who had always lived in the neighbourhoods, for those that had grown up in other parts of England and for those who had grown up in other countries. A few people commented that this change had occurred everywhere; it was not specific to these neighbourhoods. The following quotes illustrate these points in the parents' own words:

I'm frightened for my kids. I can't keep them trapped in this Close all their life. I want them to be able to trust in this world. But the way it's going is frightening.

As a child, I used to be out on my bike playing. I won't even let my kids out on the balcony. Once they're home from school, they're stuck in.

The experience they have seems to be more intense and happen younger. I knew people who were selling drugs, girls who were sexually assaulted, but it's more intense now than then.

It's not the area, it's the times that have changed. They haven't got the freedom that I had because of paedophiles. Traffic is heavier. It's just a lot more dangers.

I had a lot of freedom to play (in the Caribbean). Now I'm always shouting, whereas when I was growing up my parents never really shouted at me. I have this fear that they're going to be taken away or something dreadful's going to happen. I don't trust to leave them alone outside.

I was allowed out a lot more and a lot further than what I would allow my children to go now. I'd say that was the main thing. A lot more drugs, and people not in their right state of mind a lot of the time.

Ours are more restricted here. You have to keep them in. In Ireland we could just keep the doors open, run about. We had more freedom.

In East-Docks, a strong theme to emerge from the interviews with African parents, was the very different approach to parenting in this country. Many of the African parents in this area were critical of what they saw as lax

parenting, of the intervention of outside agencies to prevent parents physically punishing their children, and of the lack of respect of children for any adult.

> *Here, you don't allow parents to deal with their children in their own way. The law is there. It makes me scared – because if social services gets into it, you lose your kids.*

> *Children respect all adults at home, but here it's even difficult to control your own child.*

> *The general attitude of children is different now. We stopped if an old boy told us to. But now children haven't got respect for adults. Now, if you tell the boys in this block to get down, you get a mouthful of abuse.*

In both neighbourhoods, some people talked about the increase in supervised children's activities (such as going swimming) which could be seen as either a positive increase in opportunities or a defensive reaction to perceived dangers in the unsupervised environment. Children's lack of respect towards adults, increasing materialism, more hyperactivity, less community spirit and smaller social networks for families sometimes emerged from the interviews. Some people from outside London remarked on having grown up with more greenery and fresher air. Some have come to England from countries torn apart by civil war, and so felt there was no comparison to be made.

A few people felt there had been no change, and a few people mentioned positive changes (other than increased opportunities through supervised activities). One mother said that in some ways she had been more restricted than her children because she had lived in a suburb and was reliant on a car to get anywhere. Some people mentioned better toys, their children not having to work as hard in the home as they did, and free health care in this country.

What would help the families and the neighbourhoods?

I asked families what things they thought would help them most – these could be either things to do with the area as a whole, or things to do with their individual family. The top three in both neighbourhoods (though in slightly different orders) were:

- more facilities for children of all ages, including supervised play areas and parks, somewhere for teenagers to go and better childcare facilities
- better accommodation for the family
- more money, to get a job, for it to be worth going back to work, to get a better job, or to be assured of job security.

Other ideas for improvements (mentioned by more than one family) included: better education; better hospitals and reduced waiting times (East-Docks); get rid of drugs and gangs; get rid of racism (East-Docks); better shopping area with 'decent' shops; 'peace of mind' including not having to worry about paedophiles, safer streets and being able 'to live in a place without fear'; cleaner area; better transport (West-City); and to be able to move out.

Four families in West-City replied that they were very content with their lives because of their happy family life. In the words of one:

> *We are very happy. We love each other, respect each other – we're rich that way.*

6 Conclusion

A number of layers of experience make up a family's overall perception of life in a neighbourhood: personal, 'family' (including extended networks of relatives and friends), neighbourhood, broader spheres of life such as work or sport, and trends in the wider society. The families' experiences are set not just within their local communities, but in a capital city of global importance, in the context of significant international changes. Families are often acutely aware of this.

Our sample of families is not large enough to give a full account of life in the two areas. However, we included as broad a mixture of families as we could, and their insights shed important light on neighbourhood life in East London.

There were four striking findings that we did not expect. Firstly, the generally positive view of area improvements. People often felt that their neighbourhood was starting from a low base, and that much more remained to be done, particularly to tackle social conditions. But they were optimistic about progress they were seeing in physical improvements, facilities for the community, and (in East-Docks) transport. Far more were hopeful that the neighbourhoods would continue to get better, compared with views of area improvement nationally.

Secondly, the positive view of school improvements. Parents of school-age children believed that many of the primary and secondary schools were getting better in all sorts of ways. They identified improvements in school leadership, teaching, results, discipline, translation, activities on offer, image and homework. As with the areas as a whole, parents often felt that more improvement was needed, but most of the schools seemed to be on the right track.

Thirdly, the families' thoughts on race relations. Most people were very conscious of the issue of race, with a mixture of views. There were more positive or neutral comments than negative comments. Given the importance that the families placed on this issue, we decided we would explore their views further in follow-up interviews.

Fourthly, the strong desire for more community spirit and strong sense of missing it when it was not there. This really mattered to people. Around half the families (just above the national average) felt that their area already had a lot of community spirit. But far more wanted community spirit to exist. Most wanted to feel at least informally connected to neighbours, to experience friendliness, and to know that there were people nearby who they could turn to if necessary.

This report has outlined the beginnings of the study, and some of the findings emerging from the first round of interviews. We will present more detailed findings following the second round of interviews, including some comparisons between our Leeds and Sheffield areas and East London.

There may be specific London-factors at work. For example the pressurised property market, which is raising values across the capital, may help explain why alongside a high level of dissatisfaction with existing conditions many people felt their area was improving. On the other hand, many people were very aware of the regeneration of their areas, including improved community facilities, new building and physical alterations to existing homes. The 12 Areas Study will continue to monitor how the objective socio-economic indicators change over time. And we will continue to record the families' perspectives on the direction of neighbourhood change. Will the initial area and school improvements be sustained?

In our next report, we will aim to explore in greater detail the interaction between family life and the external environment. 'Interaction' implies processes, not categories of people. Social exclusion is about these processes: the absence of opportunities; the effects of fear of crime; and the concentration of poverty. Social inclusion is about the opposite: the presence of, and access to opportunities; the chance to flourish; the confidence to interact with others; and the economic capacity to participate in the things most people take for granted. Rather than being either 'in' or 'out', most families seem to cope, often in the face of serious difficulties.

We will try to identify hurdles and supports, barriers and routes to opportunities. Some of the barriers are personal ones, others lie beyond people's front doors. This is an extremely important distinction. Our study should uncover the significance of area conditions in people's lives.

References

(Note: The names of the actual neighbourhoods have been changed in line with the names used in the main report. This has affected the names of some authors and reports. For example, the 'East-Docks Partnership' is not a real name.)

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The seven Single Regeneration Budget areas surveyed by MORI
for the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions

Area	Summary profile
Chalkhill, London Borough of Brent	6,000 people, mainly living on one estate. Concentration of ethnic minority households living on the estate. Very high unemployment. The estate is undergoing significant physical improvements. Completion of SRB due 2000.
Hangleton and Knoll, Hove	Two local authority housing estates. The population is not particularly deprived but is relatively elderly. Satisfaction is high with both area and dwelling. Completion of SRB due 2000.
Royds area of Bradford	12,000 people living in three housing estates on the periphery of the city. Few ethnic minority households, high proportion of children, high proportion of lone parent households. Completion of SRB due 2002.
Canalside, Rochdale	Significant Asian community and high proportion of children. Income levels are not particularly low, but levels of educational attainment are (54 per cent of households have no qualification). Completion of SRB due 2000.
Swadlincote, South Derbyshire	32,000 people. Rural area. Low unemployment even by national standards. High satisfaction with area and dwelling. Completion of SRB due 2002.
Sunderland	55,000 people in three areas. High proportion of single people, relatively low rates of unemployment and lone parenthood. Completion of SRB due 2002.
Nottingham	32,000 people in three priority areas. 20 per cent ethnic minority households. High proportion of lone parents, very high unemployment, large proportion of local authority tenants. Completion of SRB due 2002.

Source: All information in table based on Whitehead and Smith (1998). MORI carried out the initial surveying between November 1996 and February 1997. They are conducting follow-up interviews as each programme nears completion. Results are not yet available.