

North East London includes communities characterised by high levels of unemployment, poverty and crime, and by educational underachievement. It experiences 'postcode wars' between gangs, with factions split by ethnicity and by cultural heritage.

More young people are carrying weapons, especially knives. Guns are less common but learners say that they are easily available in the community.

The 'London against gun and knife crime' website (www.london.gov.uk/gangs) dated 2006 includes demographic data about the London boroughs of Enfield, Haringey and Hackney.

- Enfield has an average sized BME population, mainly from the Asian and Black communities and including a large Muslim population (9.6 per cent).
- A third of the population of Haringey belongs to a BME group, the largest of which is the Black community.
- Nearly 56 per cent of the population of Hackney belongs to BME communities, and 80 languages other than English are spoken at home. Young people under the age of 18 make up a quarter of the population.

Gang recruitment starts in schools and extends into college life. The under-19 age group are the most vulnerable. However, College staff see guns, gangs and knives as three separate though sometimes related issues, eg carrying a knife is often an individual choice and is viewed as 'protection', rather than being linked to gang membership.

Much of the College's engagement with the GGK initiative was in response to a near-fatal stabbing in 2004 that involved Turkish/Kurdish and African/Caribbean learners.

The College of North East London (CONEL) attracts learners mainly from Haringey, Enfield and Hackney, many of whom have disadvantaged backgrounds. A quarter of the learners have no formal qualifications when they enrol at CONEL.

Over a third of enrolments are on Level 1 programmes, though the College offers courses from Entry Level to Level 7 (postgraduate), including GCSEs. Of approximately 14,000 learners, over half are from minority ethnic groups.

The largest groups are black African and black Caribbean. Approximately 83% of learners are studying part-time and 85% are aged 19 or over. More than 400 pupils aged 14-16 attend the College to take a range of vocational courses.

Website: www.conel.ac.uk



Values-led leadership

Leadership on matters relating to GGK and to community cohesion is from the front. High standards are set, with clear and consistent messages through setting an

example, poster campaigns, and a diverse range of enrichment activities that are designed to improve engagement, retention and achievement.

Focus groups are established to address specific issues as they arise, eg underachievement of African-Caribbean learners.

There is an established post of 'Keep in Line' co-ordinator, with responsibility for the 'In college = in class' policy.

There has been investment in a mentoring suite to support learners through peer mentoring. This has made a clear contribution to improving results.

Working with other agencies

The College is involved in a variety of community initiatives, including:

- the Haringey Peace Alliance, whose Chief Executive is a governor of the College (www.blessharingey.com/index_files/Page960.htm).
- BUBIC – Bubic (Bringing unity back into the community) is an award-winning community-based organisation that provides support for drug users, ex-drug users, their families and friends. The service is aimed mainly at crack users. Bubic works closely with the College to run awareness-raising events, including health screening that supports the College's 'Respect yourself' campaign www.bubic.org.uk.
- liaising with the Metropolitan Police Authority.

A recent injection of £10k from the Haringey Safer Communities Partnership (www.haringey.gov.uk/crime_reduction.htm) has helped the Learner Enrichment Team to develop activities and provide

funding for specific events (eg a successful fashion show in 2008, to be followed by a College prom in 2009).

Engaging with learners and parents/guardians

BRACE (Building Relationships Across Cultures Everywhere) was formed at CONEL in 2004 by learners who were keen to encourage dialogue and friendship between young people of all ethnicities and faiths.

The group is guided and supported by the Learner Enrichment Team (LET) and works both within the College and in the wider community of Haringey to achieve these aims and to prevent young people from being affected by violence and crime.

The 'Respect Yourself' campaign is an holistic approach to individual development that includes health screening, peer mentoring, meetings and workshops with local community members to bring groups together and learn about each other's cultures and concerns.

The development of the Learner Enrichment Team and its associated Programme has led to greater integration

and less tension between groups of learners.

The Team's accountabilities to SMT include improved retention / achievement and learner engagement across diverse groups. The LET liaises with tutors to implement a policy of 'In college = in class' (ie when a learner is on the premises, they must be in class).

The LET's engagement strategies are focused around achievement targets. They work with the Learning Mentor Service to support disruptive and disaffected learners.

The Learners Forum has a core of about 15 learners who meet with governors to raise issues. The governors hold staff to account to deliver actions relating to issues raised at the Learners Forum.



Through this forum, funding was secured to build a learner lounge which, it was felt, would give learners ownership of a shared space where they could meet, thus supporting the integration of different groups.

The lounge is managed by learners and overseen by a manager from the LET. It has helped to create greater harmony and integration where previously rival factions would congregate in different areas of the College.

Open forums and workshops about positive behaviours are held regularly and are well attended by learners from diverse groups, thus helping to improve integration and relationships.

The LET were not confident that this approach would work – they were not sure that learners would express their concerns or that others would listen – but it has been a great success and has led to learner engagement and ongoing participation in BRACE activities and other projects.

Creating a safe environment

The College has a single main entrance where learners must show their pass to security staff before reaching the turnstile. There is also a smaller 'trade' entrance that is covered by CCTV.

College management are keen to maintain a balance between an open and welcoming atmosphere and one that is safe. Knife arches are used for random checks but there are no plans to install them permanently.

In the last two years, a talk on security policy and procedures has been included in induction, resulting in clear messages being communicated to learners.

Security staff are authorised to confiscate learner passes for breaches of behaviour and to refer the matter to the relevant Head of Department, with the outcome being fed back to Security. Such breaches can lead to immediate one-day exclusion.

Security staff conduct informal patrols and report to Heads of Department or the 'Keep in Line' coordinator if concerns with particular learners are identified.

A learner who gives their pass to another person is subject to automatic 'Stage 3' disciplinary measures.

The College operates a 'hoods down' policy at all times.

There is a zero tolerance policy for breaches of College rules but disciplinary hearings have decreased in the last three years as the engagement and safety policies have taken effect.

