

## Press release

30<sup>th</sup> January 2008

### **Young people say NO to drugs in Hackney**

“Drugs are a life sentence. Education and sport are a life choice”. This was the message from 18 year old Ari Johnson from the Hackney Youth Parliament to youngsters at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual CrackDown Conference on 24<sup>th</sup> January.

Bringing together youth workers, substance misuse and prevention workers, Hackney residents and ex-drug users, the conference, at Queensbridge Centre in Hackney, highlighted the importance of understanding drugs and alcohol misuse amongst young people in the borough and looked for ways to tackle the growing problem.

“Young people experimenting with drugs is something that affects all London boroughs. The devastating impact this can have on their lives, their families and their communities cannot be underestimated” said Susmita Noonan, Interim Chief Executive, Hackney Homes.

Ex-drug users and residents affected by crackhouses and associated crime and anti-social behaviour on their estates were on hand to talk to young people about the consequences of having a drug habit. Options such as education, music and sport were promoted as an alternative to prevent young people from becoming tomorrow's problem drug users.

The conference came to a standstill when attendees were able to experience a real life crackhouse closure with the screening of a police raid shown.

“It was so dark and filthy. There were drugs and needles everywhere and the people in the flat looked so ill and malnourished” said Dawn Henry, Hackney Crackdown Project.

Ari Johnson's final message to all Hackney residents was “It takes a community to raise a child” highlighting the importance of residents, MPs, local authority and businesses working together to ensure that ‘real’ opportunities are available for young people to get involved in and away from drugs and crime.

Ends

**Press queries to Olaide Oyekanmi on 0208 356 3522, 0777 256 5514 or email [olaide.oyekanmi@hackneyhomes.org.uk](mailto:olaide.oyekanmi@hackneyhomes.org.uk)**

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Our mission is to deliver excellent, responsive housing services with decent homes and estates. To help residents lead healthy lives in safe and sustainable communities.

[www.hackneyhomes.org.uk](http://www.hackneyhomes.org.uk)

### **Notes to Editors**

CrackDown is a Home-Office part funded project aimed at achieving the sustainable closure of crackhouses in Hackney. In operation for two years, the project has significantly reducing related crime and ensuring a safe environment for Hackney residents to live.

The first of its kind in England, CrackDown brings together in one team a vulnerable persons' worker, a drug referral worker and a Police Sergeant all working to ensure that the needs of the victims and perpetrators are all adequately addressed.

How to spot a crackhouse:

- Large numbers of casual visitors
- Drugs paraphernalia left outside on balconies, stairwells, in gardens etc
- Large groups congregating on balconies or outside front doors
- Cars coming and going – particularly late at night and not stopping more than five or ten minutes.

To report a crack house in confidence, get in touch on:

Phone 0208 356 3333

Text: 07976 911165

E-mail: [crackdown@hackney.gov.uk](mailto:crackdown@hackney.gov.uk)

**Your name and address will not be asked for. All we need is information on crack houses and crack dealers.**