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# THE RIGHT TO PLAY 2<sup>ND</sup> PROGRESS REPORT

## INTRODUCTION

On 12th February 2009, children and parents from the Lower Shankill area of Belfast hosted a pioneering event on children's rights. The event, entitled *When Kids Decide: Realising the Right to Play in the Lower Shankill*, highlighted concrete barriers to children's right to play in their community.

The children and parents presented evidence on seven specific issues they had chosen in their community to local and international experts on children's rights. These included Dr. Jan Van Gils, Chair of the European Child Friendly Cities Network and President of the International Council of Children's Play, Ms Patricia Lewsley, Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People, and Jacqueline O'Loughlin, CEO of PlayBoard.

The specific issues chosen by the children and parents, called human rights indicators, were as follows:

- Broken glass in the community;
- Broken lighting in play areas and parks;
- Cleanliness of play areas;
- Speed of traffic;
- Access to facilities for teenagers and young adults;
- Access to facilities for children with special needs; and
- Participation of children and parents in decisions related to play.

Local policy and international human rights standards already require all of these issues to be addressed by the government.

At the event, the group also set specific benchmarks for these problems to be improved in line with policy standards.

In August 2009, the Lower Shankill Residents' Voice released their first Progress Report from monitoring which occurred in June 2009, which indicated improvements on two indicators (lighting and access to facilities for teenagers and young adults); however of the others monitored, the benchmarks for progress had not been met. The group received national attention when they launched their 'Walking on Broken Glass' Campaign at the time of the first Progress Report.

This 2<sup>nd</sup> Progress Report outlines the results from monitoring in September and October 2010.

Here are the latest results.



## Human Rights Indicator #1 Broken Glass in the community.

For their first indicator, children and adults identified BROKEN GLASS that has been left lying across the lower Shankill as an issue which required immediate attention. This broken glass is especially prevalent in areas where children play.

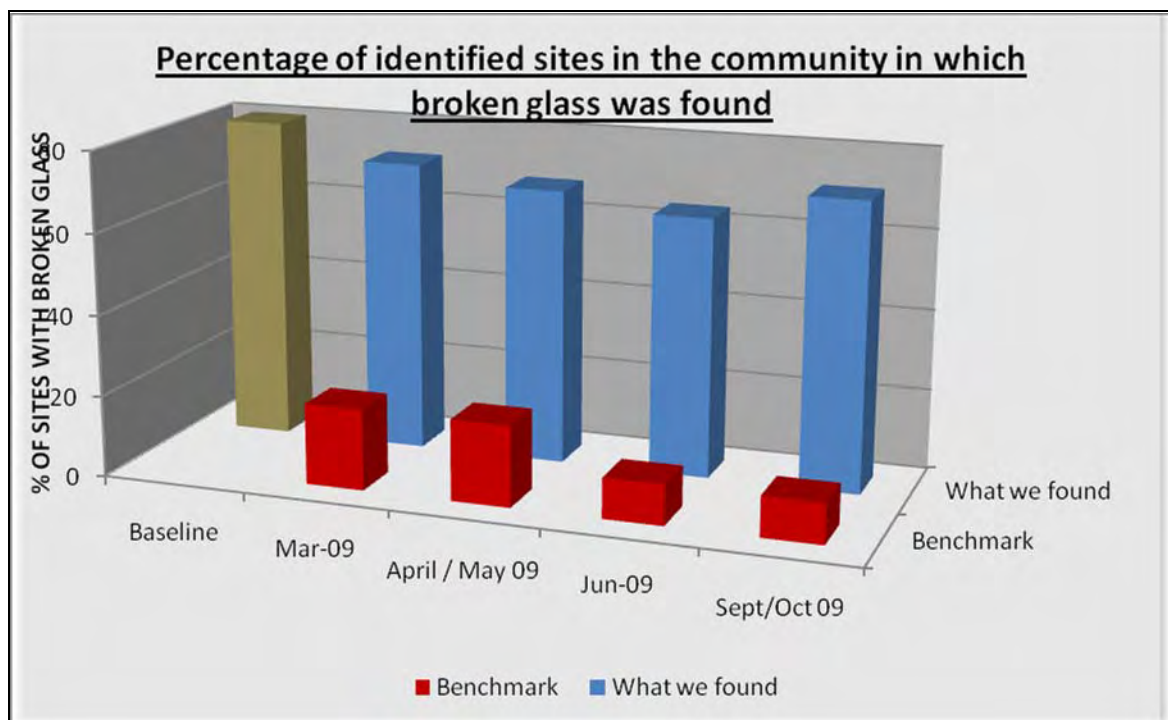
### Policy Standard

“Child’s right to play space is especially at risk in many urban environments, where...noise, pollution and all manner of dangers [combine] to create a hazardous environment for young children.”

– UN CRC General Comment No. 7

### How is this monitored?

This indicator is monitored on a monthly basis by children and adult residents. Using checklists and photographs, they monitored 25 sites across the Lower Shankill near places where children play on an ongoing basis over the last three months.



	Baseline	Mar-09	April / May 09	Jun-09	Sept/Oct 09
Benchmark	80	20	20	10	10
What we found	80	72	68	64	71



### What has been done?

In August 2009, the Lower Shankill Residents' Voice launched the '**Walking On Broken Glass' Campaign**<sup>1</sup> specifically to tackle this issue in their community. Despite local and regional press and media coverage, newspaper articles, and numerous radio and television interviews with adult and child LSRV members, the number of sites with broken glass has actually risen from 64% to 71%. This is the first time the situation has worsened since monitoring began.



### What needs to be done now?

1. The children, young people, and adults in the LSRV call on the government and relevant public authorities (NIHE and Belfast City Council) to:
  - 'do their jobs' - this involves inspecting and cleaning the areas of the estate they have responsibility for;
  - regularly report back to the LSRV Monitoring Group on what areas of the estate have been cleaned and when.
2. Educate people in the local community and elsewhere that this is a rights issue. This could involve:
  - education in local schools about litter and broken glass and what it is doing to the community;

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on the 'Walking on Broken Glass' Campaign see [www.youtube.com/PPRProject](http://www.youtube.com/PPRProject)



- relevant public bodies could send letters to owners of local pubs and clubs asking that do not let patrons leave their premises with glasses or bottles;
  - a community initiative to design a poster for local businesses, community centres and churches about broken glass and its effects on the community. This initiative cannot be a substitute for action by the relevant authorities.
3. More focused resources and somewhere for the young people aged 10-18 to go are required to begin addressing ‘anti-social behavior’. The LSRV supports the call from other groups in the area for lights to be installed at the Dover all-weather pitch to provide for evening events.



## Human Rights Indicator #2 Lights working in parks and playgrounds.

For their second indicator, children and adults chose the issue of lights not working in parks and playgrounds throughout the Lower Shankill. Children cannot play safely if the lighting in these areas is damaged or not working. Furthermore it is more difficult for parents to supervise their children in these conditions.

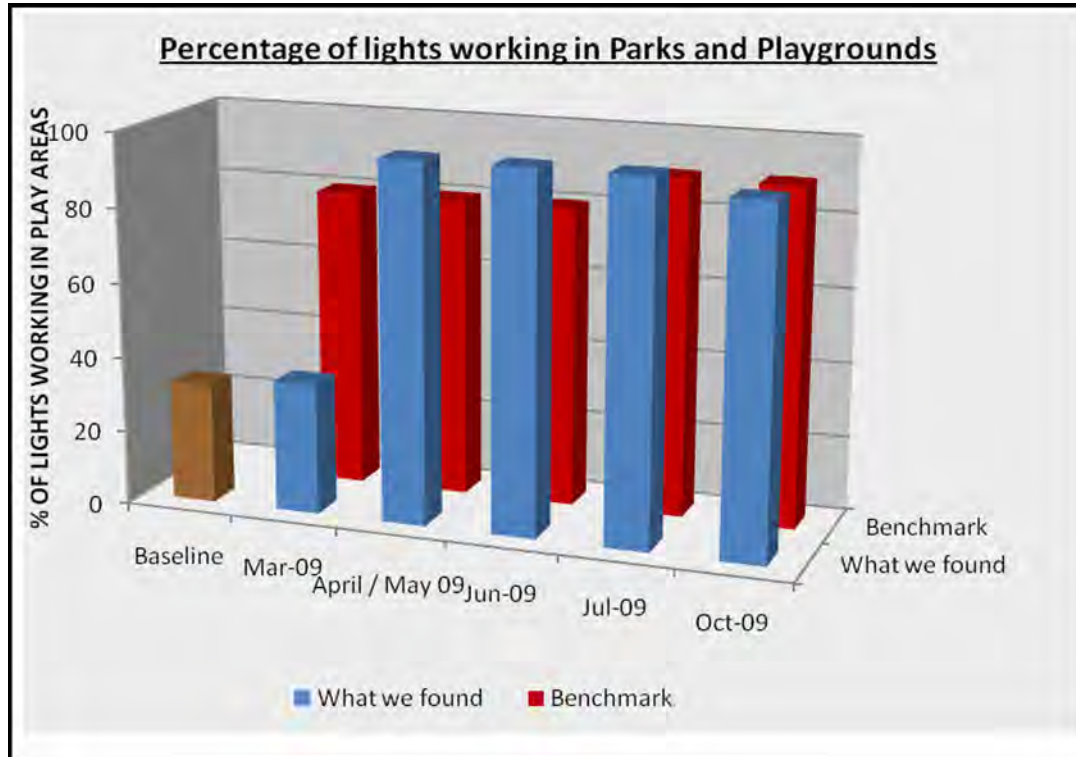
### Policy Standards

“Lighting in certain areas of a park is essential for safety, especially of children at nighttime: whilst the application of lighting also plays a major role in helping to deter many forms of anti-social behaviour in outdoor locations.” –Official Lighting Guide, Belfast City Council.

“Child’s right to play space is especially at risk in many urban environments, where...noise, pollution and all manner of dangers [combine] to create a hazardous environment for young children.” – UN CRC General Comment No. 7

### How is this monitored?

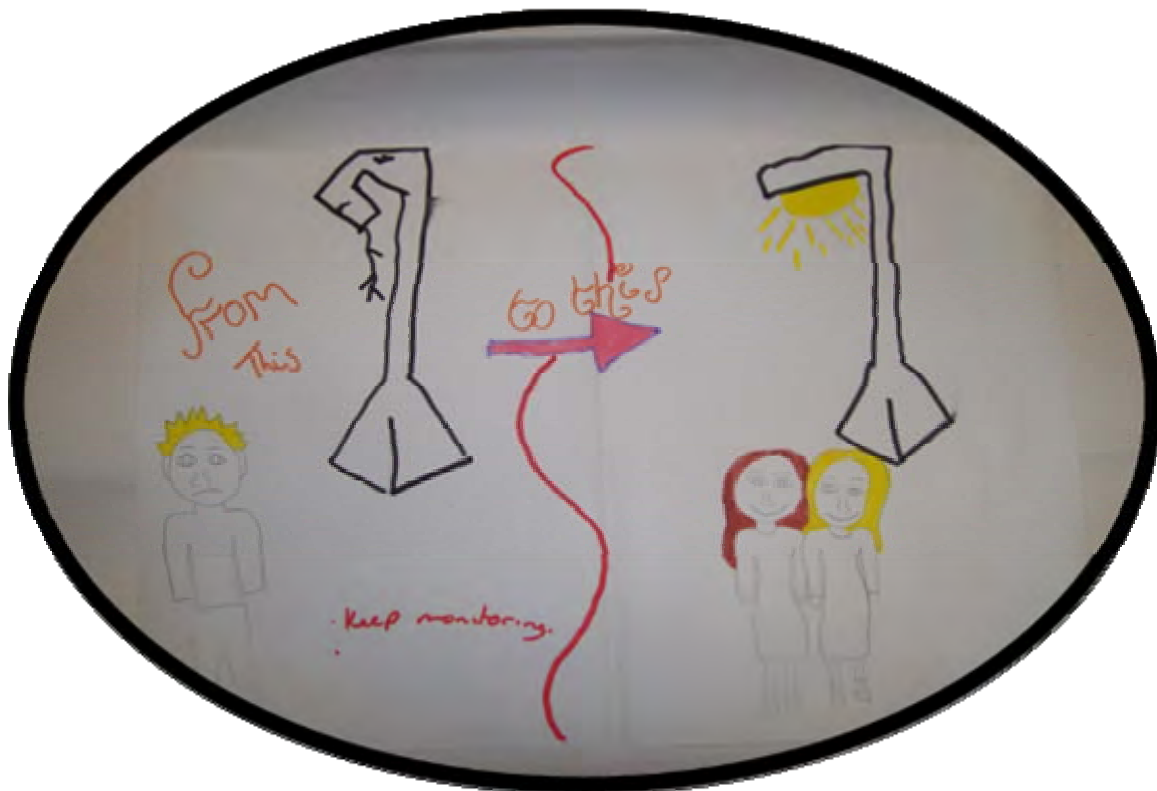
This indicator is monitored on a monthly basis by Lower Shankill residents. Over the last three months, they monitored the number of lights working in Hammer Park, Dover Street Park and Brown Square Park.



	Baseline	Mar-09	April / May 09	Jun-09	Jul-09	Oct-09
What we found	32	35	96	96	96	92
Benchmark	32	80	80	80	90	90

**What has been done?**

In February 2009, only 32% of the lights were working in the Lower Shankill’s playgrounds and parks. After pressure from the group, 96% were working in June 2009. This number has now fallen to 92% of lights working when measured in October. Although the percentage working is still over the 90% benchmark set by the group there is a slight decrease in the percentage of lights working and the group will continue to monitor this closely to ensure further problems don’t occur.



**What needs to be done?**

1. The children, young people, and adults in the LSRV will continue monitoring the percentage of lights working in parks and playgrounds on a monthly basis to ensure that no further regressions occur.
2. Government and the relevant public authorities (Belfast City Council, Department for Regional Development) should engage with the LSRV Monitoring Group on what work has been done and where.



## Human Rights Indicator #3 Cleanliness of Play Areas

For their third indicator, children and adults chose cleanliness of play areas in the Lower Shankill. Cleanliness relates directly to the accessibility of facilities for children. If an area is unclean, not only is it unattractive, but it creates physical barriers and potential risks to children attempting to realise their right to play.

<b>Policy Standards</b>
<p>“Play areas in the Lower Shankill area of Belfast are cleaned daily.” –Belfast City Council response to Freedom of Information Request from the group.</p>
<p>“Child’s right to play space is especially at risk in many urban environments, where...noise, pollution and all manner of dangers [combine] to create a hazardous environment for young children.” – UN CRC General Comment No. 7</p>

### How is this monitored?

This indicator is monitored monthly using a checklist. The checklist allows residents and children to monitor whether or not there is rubbish on the ground or graffiti on the equipment. Local perception of the cleanliness of these areas has also been monitored using a survey of parents and children after 6 months of monitoring.

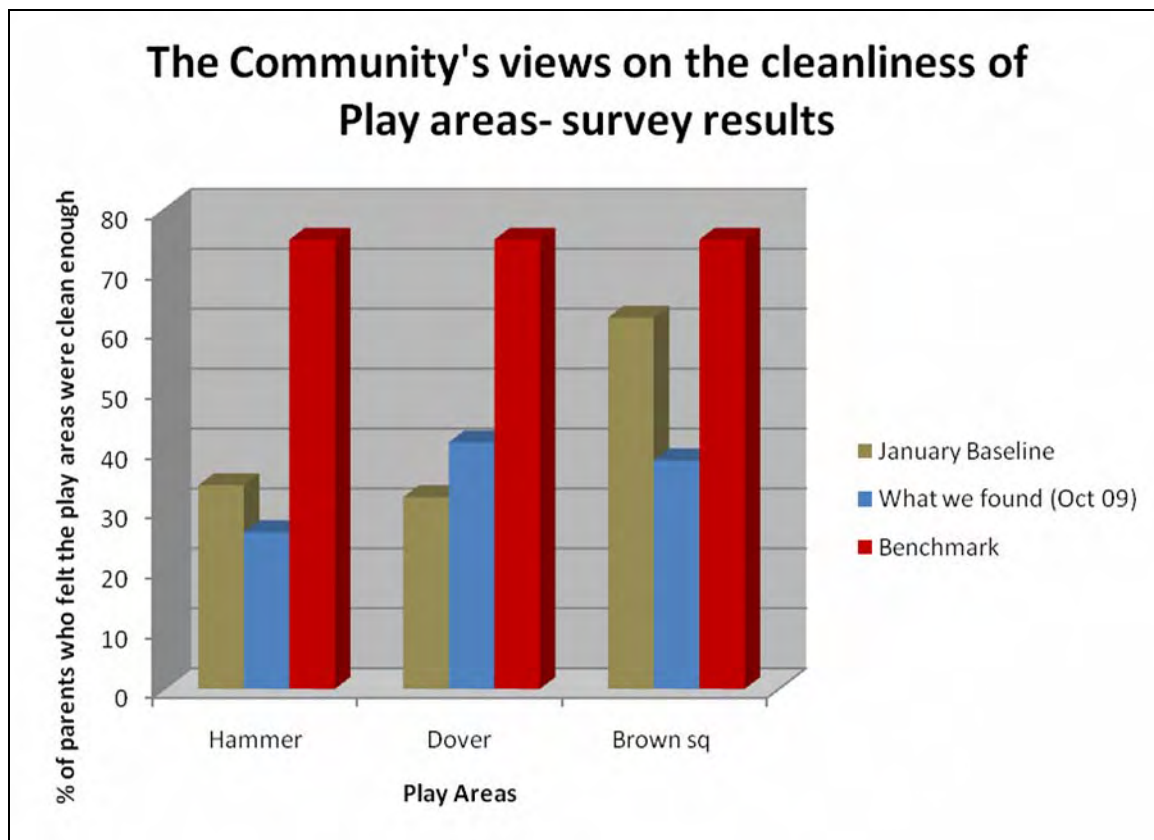
### MONTHLY MONITORING

	<b>Baseline (Feb 2009)</b>	<b>April/ May 2009</b>	<b>June 2009</b>	<b>Sept/Oct 2009</b>
<b>Hammer Play Area</b>	<p><b>Broken glass in play area. Rubbish around equipment Rubbish in open areas Graffiti on equipment</b> (note: grassy area covered in bottles and rubbish)</p>	<p>No Rubbish in play area or pitch  <b>Much Graffiti on equipment</b></p>	<p>Some Rubbish. Graffiti on equipment</p>	<p>Rubbish around the equipment and graffiti on the walls</p>
<b>Dover Play Area</b>	<p><b>Broken glass in play area. Rubbish</b></p>	<p>No Rubbish in play area or pitch No Graffiti</p>	<p>Rubbish, especially around the play area.</p>	<p>Some rubbish around the equipment. Graffiti on the</p>



		<p>around equipment Rubbish in open areas</p> <p>Very little graffiti</p>	<p>on equipment for small children</p> <p>Same graffiti on rocks, etc. No rubbish bin in play area.</p>	<p>No graffiti on equipment for small children</p>	<p>equipment</p>
<b>Brown Park</b>	<b>Square</b>	<p>No Graffiti</p> <p>Broken glass in play area. Rubbish around equipment Rubbish in open areas</p>	<p>No Graffiti No Rubbish in play area.</p> <p>Some Rubbish in open area</p>	<p>No Graffiti. No Rubbish in play area. No rubbish in open area</p>	<p>No Graffiti. No Rubbish in play area. No rubbish in open area</p>

## SURVEY RESULTS



	Baseline (Jan 2009)	What we found (Oct 09)	Benchmark
<b>Hammer</b>	34%	26.2%	75%
<b>Dover</b>	32%	41.15%	75%
<b>Brown Sq</b>	62%	38.15%	75%



### What has been done?

The latest round of survey results are worrying. Only the Hammer increased in cleanliness according to the views of local parents and children. Even Brown Square which was the cleanest in January/February has dropped by over a third to 38.15%. None of the three sites meet the benchmark of 75% of parents and children viewing them as clean enough.

Despite the views of those surveyed in the local community, the Lower Shankill Residents' Voice's monthly monitoring of the area (see first table) presents a different story, with Brown Square having been maintained as a suitably clean area for children to play in with no graffiti or rubbish in either the play area or the open area.

### What needs to be done?

1. Graffiti and rubbish should be removed from the equipment in the Dover play area and from the walls at the Hammer by Belfast City Council prior to next monitoring by residents, *i.e.* within one month.
2. The children, young people, and adults in the LSRV should continue to monitor the cleanliness of the play areas and talk to local residents about their opinions on the cleanliness of the areas.
3. The Belfast City Council should engage with the LSRV Monitoring Group on what work has been done and where in relation to this indicator. We'll report on progress (or otherwise) to the wider community through newsletter.

## Human Rights Indicator #4 Speed of Traffic

For their fourth indicator, adults and children in the Lower Shankill chose the speed of traffic as an issue which required immediate attention. The speed of traffic in the Lower Shankill, particularly in places close to where children play, has been a long standing issue for residents.

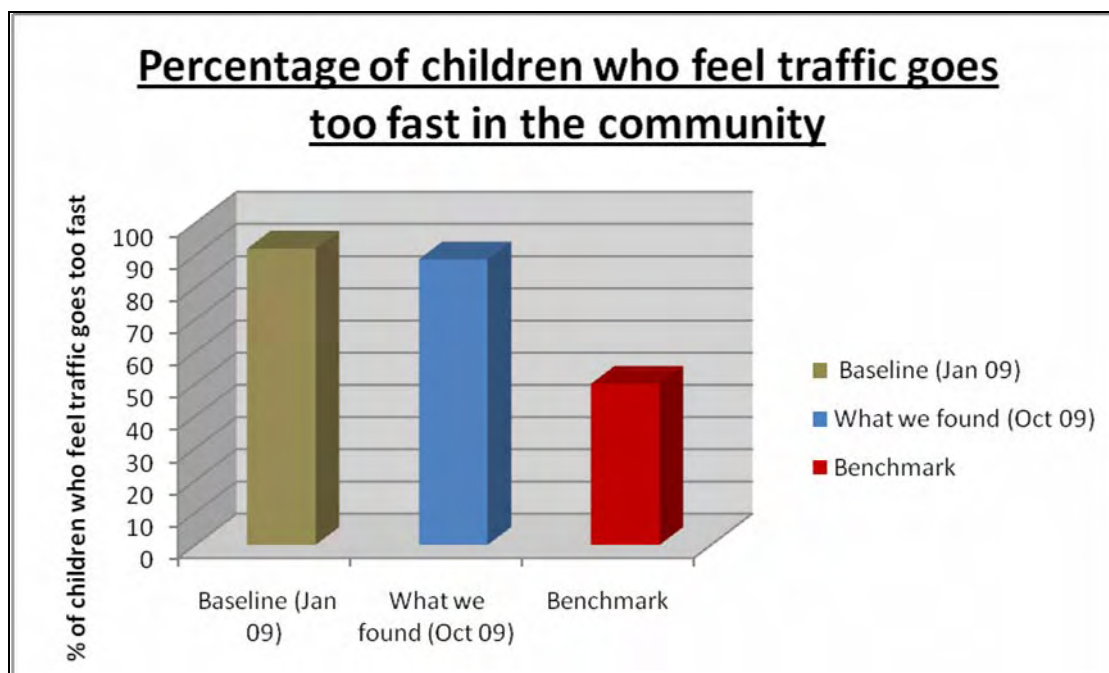
### Policy Standards

“We will work to create a fairer society and look after our most disadvantaged by...reducing by 33% the overall number of people, and by 50% the number of children killed or seriously injured on our roads by 2012.” –NI Programme for Government 2008-2011

“Child’s right to play space is especially at risk in many urban environments, where...noise, pollution and all manner of dangers [combine] to create a hazardous environment for young children.” – UN CRC General Comment No. 7

### How is this monitored?

This indicator is monitored every 6 months using a survey of children in the area. Additionally, following the implementation of a traffic calming scheme on Shankill Parade, Denmark Street and North Boundary Street, the group carried out a short survey of parents and children living on or near these roads. They wanted to test how effective the traffic calming scheme was in protecting children from cars and lorries.



Baseline (Jan 09)	92
What we found (Oct 09)	88.7
Benchmark	50

### What has been done?

In February 2009, 92% of children surveyed reported that traffic was going too fast. In March and April 2009, a traffic calming scheme was introduced in Shankill Parade, Denmark Street and North Boundary Street. By October 2009, the percentage of children who felt traffic in the area was going too fast had fallen to only 89% and is still a significant distance from the benchmark.



### What needs to be done?

1. The children, young people, and adults in the LSRV to organize a monitoring of the speed of traffic in the estate to gain quantitative data.
2. Meeting to be held between Lower Shankill Residents' Voice and Roads Service (DRD) to discuss the traffic problem. New traffic ramps were installed in February and the situation has only improved by 3%! Steps must be taken to address these problems.
3. Roads Service (DRD) engaging with the LSRV Monitoring Group on what work has been done and where in relation to this indicator.

## Human Rights Indicator #5

## Access to Facilities for Teenagers and Young Adults

For their fifth indicator, adults and children chose access to facilities for teenagers and young adults as an issue which required immediate attention. They focused their indicator on access to the only free, public youth facility in the Lower Shankill – the Hammer Youth Resource Centre on Agnes Street. This centre is designed for teenagers and young adults. It is a multi-million pound facility run by the BELB and should play a pivotal role in ensuring local young people have access to recreation and play in a structured and organised environment.

### Policy Standard

“Yet, realising the right to rest, leisure and play is often hindered by a shortage of opportunities to meet, play and interact in child-centered, secure, supportive, stimulating and stress free environments.”

–UN CRC General Comment No.7, para 34.

### How is this monitored?

This indicator is monitored both through a biannual survey of parents who have children who are teenagers or young adults as well as through monthly monitoring of how often the Hammer Youth Resource Centre is open.

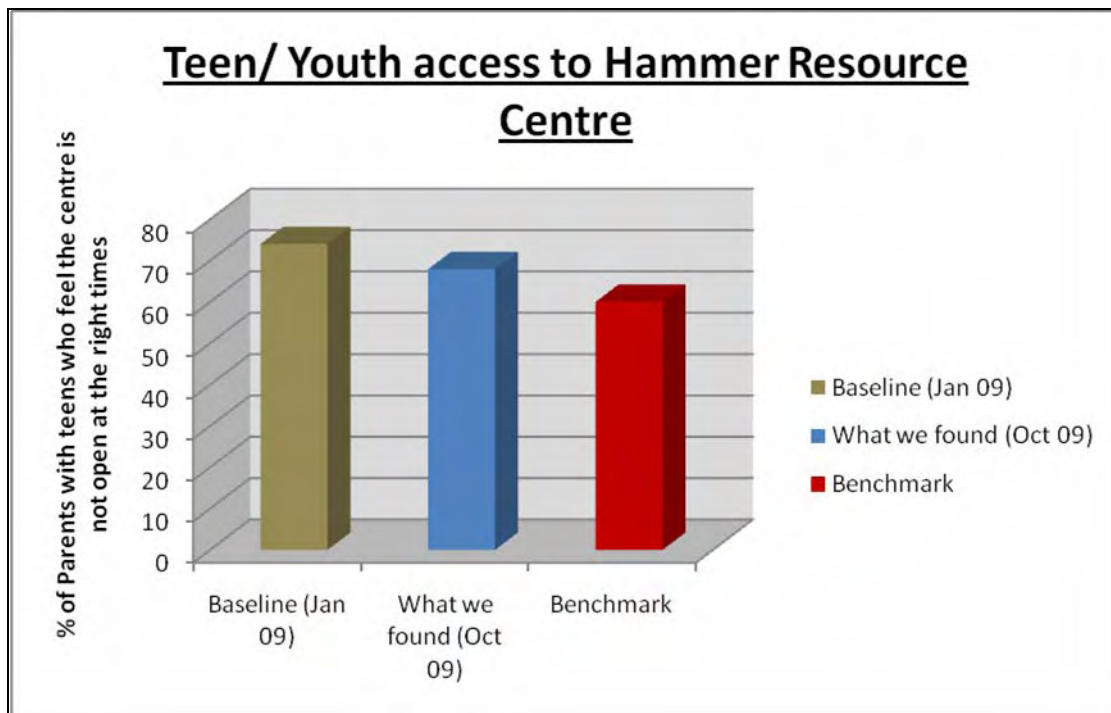
### MONTHLY MONITORING

<b>Hammer Youth Resource Center (Access for Teens &amp; Young Adults)</b>	
<b>March 2009</b>	Open 1 night per week
<b>April/May 2009</b>	Open 2 nights per week Plans to open for 5 nights a week in near future.
<b>June 2009</b>	Engagement with BELB. <b>Officially agreed to open 5 nights / week as open youth facility</b> Current plan: open 3 nights / week by September. Open 4 nights / week by December. Open 5 nights / week by January.
<b>October 2009</b>	<b>Hammer now open 4 nights a week as follows:</b>  MW – Kids Club 3pm – 5pm for ages 5 – 11  MTW – Youth Club 6.30pm – 9.30pm for ages 12+  Thursday – Football Coaching 5pm –



	<p>7pm for ages 5 – 9</p> <p>Thursday – Judo 7pm – 9.30 pm for all ages</p> <p><b>Centre will be open 5 nights per week by December hopefully</b></p>
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**SURVEY RESULTS**



Baseline (Jan-09)	74
What we found (Oct 09)	67.9
Benchmark	60

**What has been done?**

The October results show a reduction in the percentage of parents who say that their teenage children do not use the Hammer Resource Centre because it is not open at the right times. Nevertheless the benchmark of 60% has not been met, and there is significant work to be done to address this problem if the next benchmark of 30% is to be met in a further 6 months time.

**What needs to be done?**

1. The monthly monitoring shows that Hammer Resource Centre is now open much more frequently at four nights a week. This is quadruple the amount of time that it was open when monitoring began and the BELB and local youth workers are to be congratulated on their efforts and dedication. Further conversations need to happen with young people,



children and adult residents on why this dramatic change in opening hours is not reflected more sharply in the survey results.

2. BELB engaging with the LSRV Monitoring Group on what work has been done and where in relation to this indicator



## Human Rights Indicator #6 Access to Facilities for Children with Special Needs

For their sixth indicator, children and adults chose access to play facilities for children with special needs. Designated play areas should be sites which all children in the community can access equally. Play areas provide a social as well as a recreational function. They fulfill an important role in ensuring that children with disabilities and special needs are fully included in the life of the community.

### Policy Standard

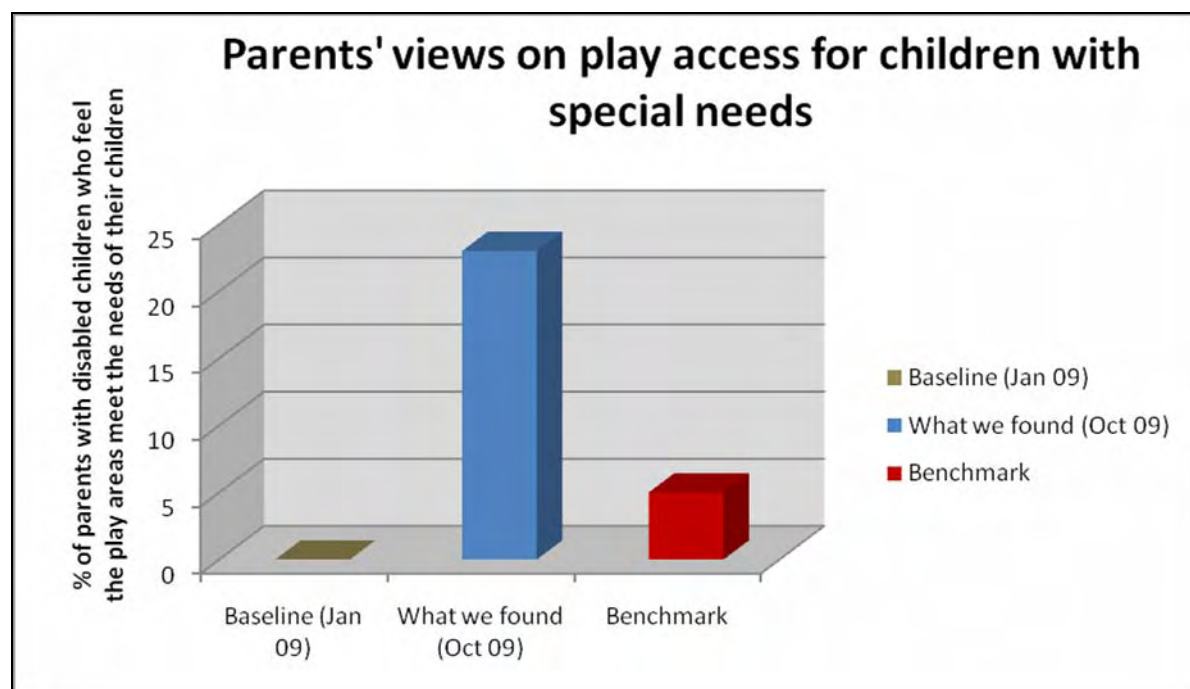
“The attainment of full inclusion of children with disabilities in the society is realised when children are given the opportunity, places and time to play with each other (children with disabilities and no disabilities).” –UN CRC General Comment 9, para 70.

The United Kingdom needs to “strengthen its efforts to guarantee the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child...[with] particular attention to provide children, including those with disabilities with adequate and accessible playground spaces to exercise their play and leisure activities.”

–Concluding Observations on the CRC for the United Kingdom (3 October 2008)

### How is this monitored?

This indicator is monitored through the use of surveys which assess the opinion of parents with children who have special needs. These surveys ask parents how well the play areas in their communities meet the needs of their children.



Baseline (Jan 09)	0
What we found (Oct 09)	23
Benchmark	5

In February 2009, 0% of parents with children with special needs thought play areas met their



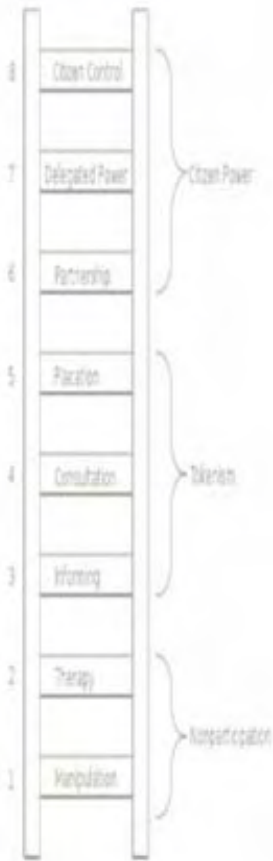
children's needs. In October 2009, this percentage had risen to 23%.

### **What needs to be done?**

1. There has been a sizeable increase in the percentage of parents with children who have special needs who feel that the play areas meet their children's requirements and the benchmark has been met. However, there is a lot more work to be done. The LSRV deliberately set the first benchmark quite low so that attainment would be realistic given the stark baseline monitoring of 0% satisfaction. This benchmark is due to rise to 15%, 40% and 85% over the next 18 months. To achieve this there will need to be significant improvements in terms of available play equipment and access to play facilities.
2. More work needs to be done with children with special needs/disability in Lower Shankill and their parents. They should be centrally involved in identifying what is wrong with existing facilities and how their needs, and the needs of their children, can be addressed.
3. The relevant public authorities (Belfast City Council, Belfast Education and Library Board) should engage with the LSRV Monitoring Group on what work has been done and where in relation to this indicator

## Human Rights Indicator #7 Participation of Children and Parents in Decisions about Play

For their final indicator, adults and children chose the participation of children and parents in decision-making about play as one of the issues that needed to be addressed. Having an active and meaningful role in decisions made about your life is a necessary part of human rights. This applies as much to the right to play as it does to other human rights issues such as housing, work, education, and health. Children and parents from the Lower Shankill should be able to actively participate in designing, developing, and evaluating decisions about play in their community.



### Policy Standard

“If consultation is to be meaningful, documents as well as processes need to be made accessible. But appearing to ‘listen’ to children is relatively unchallenging: giving due weight to their views requires a real change.” -UN CRC General Comment No. 5, para 12.

### How is this monitored?

Adults, children and young people who live in the area were asked in surveys conducted by the group how involved they felt in decisions made about play in their community. Children were asked if they had been asked about their play areas and adults were asked to rate their involvement in decisions made about play. Although the results show a slight decrease in children who feel involved in decision making, they also show a substantial decrease in the percentage of parents who feel not involved at all in decision making, possibly as a result of the work of the group.

	JANUARY 2009	October 2009
% of Children / Young People who had been asked about their play areas	39.4%	38.1%
% of parents who felt		
Not Involved	89.9%	66.7%
Not Very Involved	7.1%	14.4%
Somewhat Involved	1.0%	16.7%
Very Involved	2.0%	2.2%

### Next Steps



- Need to recruit more children and young people from the area to the group through schools and local youth groups.
- Ensure that information received, discussed and disseminated by the group is in a format suitable for and accessible by both adults and children.
  - LSRV Monitoring Group which will involve children and adults. Public bodies should engage with this group





## ***CONCLUSION***

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2010, members of the Lower Shankill Residents' Voice visited Stormont Castle to meet with OFMdFM Junior Ministers Robin Newton and Gerry Kelly to present the latest round of monitoring results detailed in this report.

Following presentations from the group, THE Junior Ministers committed OFMdFM to working with the group on their human rights indicators and benchmarks through the Lower Shankill Monitoring Group. We welcome this commitment by OFMdFM and hope this will provide the foundations for positive and constructive engagement which will benefit the residents of the Lower Shankill in the short, medium, and long term.

The Lower Shankill Monitoring Group will convene a meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2010 prior to carrying out our twelve month monitoring. This meeting will provide relevant statutory bodies and government departments, who have not engaged with us to date, the opportunity to report on what work they have done in the Lower Shankill to progress the indicators since our last measurement in October 2009.

The Department for Regional Development, specifically the Roads Service, the Department for Social Development and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, as well as the Belfast City Council will all be invited to appoint a liaison representative to take part in the Monitoring Group and report back to the community on issues for which they have responsibility.

The Lower Shankill Residents' Voice envisage that through direct and constructive work with relevant duty bearers real improvement on the issues identified here can be achieved. We anticipate that the Monitoring Group will provide a structure thorough which residents can meaningfully participate in decisions made about our community.

