

DEPUTATION

to

London Borough of Camden

2 November 2005

By

West End Drugs Partnership Community Representatives on
behalf of:

Bloomsbury Association; Covent Garden Community Association;
Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association; Soho Society; New Compton
Street Residents Association; Tin Pan Alley Traders Association
(Denmark Street Traders Association); Strand, Aldwych &
Trafalgar Square Association; Brunswick Residents & Tenants
Association; Bloomsbury Improvement Group; Covent Garden
Business Forum; Bloomsbury Joint Security Group; Centre Point
House Residents Association; Bedford Court Mansions;
Bloomsbury Ward Police Consultative group;
St Giles Renaissance Forum.

- **WE MOST STRONGLY OPPOSE THE PROPOSAL BY CAMDEN DRUGS ACTION TEAM TO CONVERT THE PUBLIC TOILET IN THE TUNNEL BETWEEN CHARING CROSS ROAD AND TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD UNDERGROUND STATION INTO A NEW DEDICATED FIXED SITE NEEDLE EXCHANGE.**
- The area south of Euston Road including St Giles, has suffered from serious and continuous street based drugs activity, associated anti social behaviour and acquisitive crime for the past 7 years that has left a deep scar on our community. This has become the single most important factor in the degradation of our Quality of Life in Camden.
- Camden DAT tell us that there is no evidence to show that a dedicated needle exchange site would cause further problems! The Health Impact Assessment produced in 2004 shows ample evidence of the problem that the DAT chooses to ignore, and we can show documentary evidence of very large numbers of used needle finds over the last 3 years, and over 1000 written anti social behaviour incident reports of which over 95% are drug related over the past 10 months in Bloomsbury alone.

- The catalyst for this problem is the 500+ addicts who are housed in local hostels. This critical mass of drug addicts, attract drug dealers and non-local drug users into the West End and are responsible for much of the acquisitive local crime. Camden DAT, the West End Drugs Partnership and other drug agencies agree that the dispersal of this over-concentration of drug services south of Euston Road, is the correct long term policy to take.
- Consensus was reached on the WEDP, by Camden and Westminster agencies and the community representatives to implement a 'mixed economy' policy that would make better use of EXISTING facilities such as GP's, hostels and health outlets, rather than create any new facility dedicated to needle exchange services. The Community and business groups in the West End are UNANIMOUS in their belief that the 'mixed economy' is the only proper solution.
- This proposal by Camden DAT has shattered the mixed economy consensus and if implemented will aggravate an already intolerable burden on the community. No provision has been made by the DAT for increased support to the communities from the police to tackle the resulting anti social behaviour that will be inevitable. Concentrating facilities in one such location will be a disastrous mistake and will make matters worse. Camden Council does not have the mandate to decide on a measure that will cause such serious repercussions on our community.
- Camden DAT state their proposal is a 'short term solution' - short term solution to what, we ask? The £200K or more that has been discovered for this 'temporary' project would be better used to enhance and improve the current services, thus addressing the LONG TERM problem, NOT wasted on redecorating a public toilet that was closed as a result of the violence perpetrated by crack addicts and drug dealers.
- The DAT claims that no-one lives in the area. Yet another insult to local voters, businesses and workers. They have not even mentioned the fact that tens of millions of people pass through this area every year as visitors or workers.

They have not mentioned that Westminster City Council and London Underground oppose this measure. In fact we are not aware of anyone that agrees with the proposal.

- We and many others have spent many years working in partnership with the authorities and WEDP to improve this area. Tens of millions of pounds are being invested into redeveloping St Giles High Street in the near future. This proposal by the DAT is an affront to everyone that has tried to help improve Community Safety in the West End. This Drug Action Team proposal is seriously misguided and flawed. **We urge you NOT to take this matter forward. Our opposition is UNANIMOUS and UNAMBIGUOUS.**
- **Professionals, practitioners and the community agree that drug treatment is the correct way forward. For this to be effective Camden's Primary Care Trust & Drug Action Team must take their responsibility more seriously and provide an HOLISTIC approach towards the treatment and care of drug misusers. These services must be within an APPROPRIATE MEDICAL SETTING, in order to provide all the necessary specialist staff and support in a safe and secure environment.**

Presented by: Bloomsbury Association; Covent Garden Community Association; Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association & Soho Society.