

Changing London

A vision for London's next Mayor

The best place in the world to grow up

This is the first in a series of six papers by David Robinson and Will Horwitz drawing on the ideas of contributors to *ChangingLondon* over the winter and spring of 2013/14.

change-london.org.uk

Changing London: An introduction to this series

London is a wonderful city: diverse, rich and full of talents, but is it the best that it could be?

The London Mayor holds the UK's biggest directly elected mandate. We should expect from our next leader an ambition that matches the scale of the opportunity – fair, deliverable and bold. To become the greatest place on earth to raise a child perhaps? Or the global capital for ethical business. Or maybe the world's most peaceful city, free from hatred and violence, on our streets and in homes?

Changing London is a platform for generating and debating ideas, drawing on those from cities abroad but also on the creativity and innovation of Londoners and our friends. Thinking anew, not only about the direct responsibilities of the mayoralty but also about exploiting the powers of influence – the voice, the visibility and the unique capacity to convene that come with the office.

We ran a blog over the winter and spring of 2013/14 crowdsourcing ideas. Now we are developing them in a series of discussion papers. This is the first. Particular thanks to those who wrote specifically about children and young people and whose ideas are the core of this paper:

Jamie Audsley, Emily Benn, Sylvie Bray, Matt Downie, Rosie Ferguson, Sally Goldsworthy, Paul Hocker, Megan Jarvie, Zoe Kilb and the children of the Discover Children's Centre, Anne Longfield, Abdullah Mahmood & the young people from Dare London, Gracia McGrath, Richard McKeever, Toni Nash, Sarah Richardson, Ellie Robinson, Sally Rogers, and Mandy Wilkins. They bear no responsibility for any mistakes of course, which are all ours.

Seoul's Mayor - former community activist Park Won-Soon - is transforming the capital of South Korea into the world's first 'Sharing City.' Boston's Thrive in Five brings together hundreds of teachers, social workers, parents and children to ensure every child is ready to start school. Stockholm aims to be the world's leading green city by 2030, and Amsterdam plans to reduce its carbon emissions by 40% by 2025. Mayors across the world have rocked their cities in recent years with extraordinary achievements. If they can do it, couldn't we?

Please comment on this paper, watch out for the next one in July and send us your ideas. Join the conversation and change London.

change-london.org.uk

David Robinson ***david.robinson@change-london.org.uk***
Will Horwitz ***will.horwitz@change-london.org.uk***

Contents

London: A great place grow up	4
For every child: a fun, friendly community	7
For every child: experience of all London has to offer	10
For every child: the extra help, whatever it takes	13
For every child: the first step into a career	17
For every child: a decent income and good home	19
For every child: the right to be heard	22
Conclusion	23
References	24

London: A great place grow up

What if the Mayor, its businesses, public services, charities and citizens determined to make London the greatest place on Earth to raise a child?

“If we can lead in finance (or law or fashion or Olympic Games) it is neither illogical nor grandiose to demand of our Mayor that this great world city leads the globe in nurturing our young. It would require vaunting, breath-taking, ridicule-risking ambition.” So said south London teacher and community organiser Jamie Audsley, in one of the first contributions to Changing London.

We set up Changing London to develop and debate ideas for London’s next Mayor. Dozens of contributors shared Jamie’s passion, and their ideas form the bedrock of this paper. They included children and young people, who mourned the paucity of sweetshops and the cost of games consoles but were forceful in demanding decent schools, better transport and housing, more to do, reduced inequality and more opportunity; in this their views differed little from those of our adult contributors. Laid out below is our children’s vision too.

London can be a wonderful place to grow up. Some can take advantage of the opportunities to learn, to play, to experience culture from all around the world, living in safe communities with supportive neighbours, good services, and a loving family. Yet low pay and high costs consign a third of children to living in poverty.¹ Densely-packed, often poor quality housing damages health. Cars dominate public space, leaving little room to play. Insecurity and transience stop neighbours getting to know each other. Violence and fear blights the lives of a minority. We are a young city - a quarter of us are aged under 19 - yet we don’t want to grow up here: a recent poll asked Londoners where they would rather spend their childhood if given the chance again, and most opted for elsewhere.²

The former Mayor of Bogotá Enrique Peñalosa said:

“We know a lot about the ideal environment for a happy whale or a happy mountain gorilla. We’re far less clear about what constitutes an ideal environment for a happy human being...if we can build a successful city for children, we will have a successful city for all people.”

He is right. Our infrastructure, services, and systems are not designed with the happiness of children and young people in mind. They leave many desperately struggling to thrive and it is to them that a civilised society must turn first. It also traps many in a childhood that is good but not the best it could be, and even the luckiest children would see their lives improved if the streets and communities around them were thriving too.

This is not only about the mayor's direct responsibilities – transport, policing or housing - important though they are. Even more can be done with the powers of influence: the voice, the visibility and the capacity to convene. The superpowers of the mayoralty overlooked by policy brewed in Westminster. Mayors around the world have shown the way - many have rocked their cities in recent years with thrilling achievements. Some are included below.

The London Mayor holds the UK's biggest directly elected mandate. We should expect an ambition that matches the scale of the opportunity. It should be bold and deep-rooted and, above all, it should be ours: not marketed to voters with badges and balloons in the four short weeks of an election campaign but imagined and owned by us all.

With just under two years to go until the next Mayoral election there is still time. The ideas below are - we hope - thought-provoking and in some cases radical but they are tentative and there is far more to say. We hope you will say it and together we can build a bigger vision to demand of our candidates and ultimately the next Mayor.

Based on the contributions to Changing London so far, here is our starter for ten.

The rights of every London child

When they are growing up we expect much of our children and young people. In return they should expect more from us. In her contribution Ellie Robinson suggested a set of expectations each child and young person could demand of their Mayor and their city: the rights of a London child, spelt out because many are denied them at present. We propose six:

For every child: a fun, friendly neighbourhood

- Reclaiming public space for children with 1000 play streets across our city, set up by parents under a 'presumption of consent' from local authorities.
- A ban on advertising near schools, so commercial pressure does not intrude on children's spaces.
- Child-friendly regulations for new developments including space to play.

For every child: inspiration from London's best

- Celebrate London Sundays every month - our leading cultural institutions handing over the city to children, with free tube travel for families to ensure everyone can make it in.
- A Cultural Guarantee to all Londoners of the things we will have experienced by the time we leave school - for example, see a play, visit an art gallery, write with an author and be mentored by a professional artist.
- An annual Have-a-Go Festival where we take part rather than simply watch: in art, culture, business and more.

For every child: the extra help, whatever it takes

- Replicate the dramatic improvements in London's schools across all services for children, by introducing Children's Zones across the city, supported by the London Challenge 2.
- Lead a concerted effort to eradicate illiteracy across the city.
- Provide opportunities for every child to be mentored, and every child to be a mentor themselves.

For every child: the first steps to a good career

- A Mayor's Compact with Business delivering inspiring work experience, decent apprenticeships and fair internships.

For every child: a decent income and good home

- A London Child Trust Fund to ensure all our children enter adulthood with savings
- A living wage, a better enforced minimum wage, a 30-hour week, new houses, and reformed renting.

For every child: the right to be heard

- A London Young Mayor with real power
- A children's scrutiny panel

There will be many other ideas and more to add but we will know we have succeeded when the next generation are able to say: "These are the birthrights of a London child; the best place on earth to grow up."

For every child: a fun, friendly community

1000 play streets across London, and a ‘presumption of consent’ to start a new one

“If only children had as much public space as cars, most cities in the world would become marvelous.”

Enrique Peñalosa

In 1972 a group of children living in central Amsterdam decided to reclaim their street from cars. With a calm, playful resolve they set up barriers at either end, organised petitions, took on irate car drivers and world weary adults. “Impossible! You cannot ever close a street! Out of the question!” said one. He was wrong. Local leaders took notice, they began rerouting traffic away from residential neighbourhoods, and introduced a 30km/hour speed limit. Eventually the young campaigners won the right to a permanent play street, which still exists today.³

‘Playing out’ was a fond childhood memory for several of our contributors but barely features in the lives of today’s children. “For us it was fresh air, friends, games. For our parents it was a community, an excuse to chat, a sense of shared responsibility,” said Sally Rogers. Christian Wolmar recalls “interwar pictures where residential roads, with barely a car in view, were the site of a multitude of activities, ranging from women gossiping and cleaning the pavement, to children playing cricket or football on the cobbles.”

A bucolic vision perhaps, a victim of modernity. Not necessarily. In the 1930s children played on every street but cars were already taking over: the Street Playground Act of 1938 was introduced after thousands of children were killed in road accidents. It allowed local authorities to close residential streets between 8.00am and sunset. At their peak there were 750 around the country but by the 1980s most had disappeared. Until 2011, that is, when a group of parents in Bristol decided to use legislation intended for street parties to close their road for the day. Their play street was such a success, they set up Playing Out to support other parents in their efforts and there are now dozens around the UK, including some in London.⁴

At first glance play streets don’t seem to deal with the tough stuff that should surely concern a Mayoral hopeful - crime, transport, housing, health. A nice-to-have perhaps but a priority?

Yes. We think, a priority.

Public space in which to meet and play is the lifeblood of a thriving community, particularly for our children. Parks and playgrounds are vital but astonishingly roads make up 80 per cent of our public space in London.⁵ We have surrendered them almost entirely to the car. Some are major trunk roads where cars undoubtedly belong but most are the local, residential streets along which neighbours used to meet and children used to play.

This affects our environment and our safety but also our community life. Pioneering studies as far back as the 1960s have shown that roads with more cars have fewer community activities.⁶ Busy streets mean fewer chats over the front wall, fewer impromptu gatherings in the road, and fewer children playing out and drawing adults in. It is no coincidence that cul-de-sacs sustain the highest levels of social cohesion.⁷

These community relations themselves might seem inconsequential but - as we will explore in more detail in a future paper - the strength of our ties to friends and neighbours is vital to our health and happiness, our graduation rates, our chance of being a victim of crime, and even our IQ.⁸ Close-knit, supportive communities are core to the 'tough' challenges mayors grapple with.

Parks and playgrounds are vital but astonishingly roads make up 80 per cent of our public space in London. We have surrendered them almost entirely to the car.

Play streets bring another health benefit too. When originally introduced in the 1930s they prevented children dying in traffic accidents. Today we have evolved different responses to the same problem - the tv screen and the computer console - which have themselves caused a different kind of health crisis.

Play streets are not difficult to implement: a barrier at either end of the road, a few volunteers to keep things in order, perhaps a few things to play with, and the children will do the rest. Legally very little stands in the way - as the trailblazers in Bristol, Hackney and elsewhere have shown - although there are legislative changes the Mayor could make which would ease the process. Richard McKeever suggested a 'presumption of consent' whereby local authorities would have to justify to parents why a street could not be closed if there was local enthusiasm for it to become a play street.

We suggest one thousand play streets could emerge in London within the first year of a new mayoralty. At around thirty per borough, it is not unachievable: Hackney has almost 20 already. Using the voice and visibility of the Mayor to engage local councils and encourage willing volunteers, the campaign would draw heavily on the knowledge and enthusiasm of groups like Playing Out and London Play who are pioneering the resurgence.⁹ The barriers are not financial or legislative but cultural and practical - exactly the kind that a bold, visionary Mayor can take on and tear down.

Redesign public space around children

Play streets redesignate existing space but there is also scope to redesign it from scratch, particularly in new developments. Rotterdam's pursuit of their status as a child-friendly city required new or redesigned neighbourhoods to meet four criteria:¹⁰

- 1) Child-friendly housing: specifications including a room for each child, a minimum floor space, communal play areas and safe access.
- 2) Public space: A set of development requirements that include, charmingly, "a pavement suitable for playing, 3.5 metres wide on at least one side of the street,

preferably on the sunny side’ and ‘trees with seasonal variation.’

- 3) Child friendly facilities: including at least one ‘extended school’ per district, which provides services and activities for the whole community.
- 4) Safe traffic routes: with a child-friendly network of streets in every neighbourhood.

Because local government in Rotterdam is highly localised, the city government offered each district a ‘scan’ of their neighbourhood assessing compliance with the four blocks and suggesting changes that could be made, on the understanding that the district would endeavour to implement some of the ideas, which many did. The programme cost €15m in total and ended in 2011, but its legacy lives on in actions districts are still taking to make their areas more child friendly.

London’s Mayor could use his or her planning influence to drive the adoption of similar standards across the city. Progress might be incremental and it would take many years for the impact to be felt in every neighbourhood but, if adopted now, it would shape the city in favour of children for decades to come.

Ban advertising near schools and playgrounds

In 2006 the Mayor of Sao Paulo banned all outdoor advertising. Fifteen thousand billboards were taken down, store signs were shrunk, ads were taken off buses and leafleting was forbidden. Nearly \$8m in fines helped enforce the ban. When first proposed it was met with incredulity but eight years later it is still in place and Sao Paulo is not alone - Auckland, Chennai, Vermont, Maine, Hawaii, and Alaska all have restrictions or bans. Paris reduced its advertising by thirty per cent and prohibited it entirely within fifty metres of a school gate.¹¹

Advertising is so ubiquitous in London that it can be hard to imagine the city without it. More importantly, why would we? Sao Paulo billed their ban as an effort to clean up a cluttered and messy cityscape and London would benefit from this too, but there is a more important reason.

As Neal Lawson has written, “Adverts are not there to inform but to sell one thing: unhappiness. They work because they make us dissatisfied with what we’ve got or what we look like. They make us want the next new thing, until of course the next new thing comes along.”

Their impact on children is widely acknowledged, with restrictions in place on advertising manifestly unhealthy products like alcohol and tobacco. But even adverts for seemingly harmless products exert the pernicious effect that Neal described. By marking out those who can and cannot afford the latest trainers, advertising turns inequalities of income and wealth into stark markers of social status.

Whatever we think of this in adults it is surely unjust that children are judged by other children according to what their parents can afford. Even a small step to lessen the influence of our acquisitive culture on London’s children would bind us together from a young age. As a first step, the Mayor could agree with London Councils to ban all advertising near to and in schools, as has been done in Paris.

Children will be exposed to adverts on television and the internet and in the rest of the city but this measure would send a message and set a trend; our children deserve to live in communities unsullied as far as possible by the inequality for which they bear no responsibility.

For every child: experience of all London has to offer

London Sundays: once a month, a panoply of free cultural events across the city with free tube travel for families

Who first thought of covering themselves in silver foil, standing very still, and then moving just a little bit? And what made them think of it?

Two questions which must have occurred to many of us when wandering along the South Bank past the live musicians, magicians, jugglers, escapologists and those peculiar human statues. Not all to our taste, of course, but you don't have to stop and it costs no more than you think it is worth.

So an afternoon's free entertainment? Well no. The relatively short distance from, say, east London to the centre is the price of an off peak travel card. At over £8 per adult that is not insignificant for a family on a low income. So it is that even central London's free delights – the museums, galleries, parks and river walks – are seldom enjoyed by many outside zone 1.

London Sundays would see a coordinated programme of free events and activities designed specifically for our young tourists from within the M25

As Sally Goldsworthy said, “London is a leading cultural city with world class galleries, museums and theatres. Yet for many Londoners they remain undiscovered, more likely to be visited by tourists than a teenager from a poor background growing up in Zone 4.” For a tourist a gallery is little more than an afternoon stop but for our children these experiences can open doors and open minds: “For some it's jumping the highest, running the fastest, for others it's singing, dancing, painting, performing. For every child, a dream,” said Ellie Robinson.

The recently elected Mayor of Bristol has been Making Sundays Special once a month: closing the centre of the city to cars, importing climbing walls and bouncy castles and inviting street performers to take over. Earlier this year a giant water slide constructed down a main street attracted 100,000 applicants for 360 tickets.¹²

London saw something similar in 2012 when the Olympics and the torch relay that preceded it brought families out into London in force, congregating in person and in spirit around one of the world's great sporting events. London boasts some of the world's greatest cultural institutions all year round which - with the right support - could recreate something similar and more permanent. We could start with one Sunday each month.

These London Sundays would see a coordinated programme of free events and activities designed specifically for our young tourists from within the M25, widening access to London's art, culture, history and traditions. One Sunday could see the South Bank Centre or the Natural History Museum or the Tate lead a day's celebration beyond their walls. Others could feature some of London's best musicians, dancers, authors or poets.

To ensure everyone can take part, particularly in activities in the centre of the city, that £8.90 tube ticket would have to be covered: a free return trip for every adult accompanied by a responsible child would remove one severe restraint on participation and open the event to every family.

The Olympics were a sporting occasion which opened eyes, inspired, drew Londoner's together and briefly transformed our city. We can recreate the effect on a smaller scale but regularly and consistently, once a month, with free tube travel and some enthusiastic arts partners.

A 'Have-a-Go Festival'

Edinburgh is world-famous for its wonderful annual festival but our participation is largely as audience-members, watching others perform. Could London add to its fame by being the first to host an annual festival where we all take part? Act on the stage at the National, sing at the O2, play at Wembley, paint at the Tate, write at the British Library. Have a go at riding a bike for the first time, at learning to swim, at ballroom dancing, at healthy cooking, at being a first aider. For a couple of weeks every summer the 'Have-a-Go Festival' would see London's organisations, large and small opening their doors to the public, particularly children, encouraging us all to join in.

Employers in the public and private sectors could participate too, giving children the chance to try at being a fireman, a city trader, a nurse, a plumber, a lawyer, a builder or even at being a Mayor. Opening doors and opening minds. Some opportunities would necessarily have to be restricted to only a few children but all should be advertised openly and for some activities there would be no limit on numbers.

A small central resource would provide a coherent brand and collate the opportunities in a programme and on a website but individual organisations would be responsible for managing their own involvement.

A Have-a-Go festival would not just open up new opportunities for millions of children but would send a message: London - its art and culture and sport, its community organisations, its best employers and its government - are here for the benefit of all our citizens, not just the tourists, the privileged few or those in the know.

A Cultural Guarantee for London's children

London Sundays and a Have-a-Go Festival would see children accessing the art and culture which for which London is famous but we could strengthen our duty further. Sally Goldsworthy argued in her contribution that the Mayor should institute a cultural guarantee to all London's children, of things they will have achieved by the time they leave school. "For example, see a play, visit an art gallery, write with an author and be mentored by a professional artist. This wouldn't be a restrictive Gove tick box of 50 things to preserve but a dynamic list created by children, parents, teachers and artists that captures London's quality and innovation."

A cultural guarantee of the sort Sally describes - embedded across London's schools - would perfectly embody the agenda we describe. The Mayor should lead it's development and be the public face of its implementation. London Sundays would be a part of it but the educational infrastructure would help ensure no child missed out.

For every child: the extra help, whatever it takes

Sylvie Bray mentored a 7 year old boy who had never been out of Peckham. When they took a Thames Clipper down the river he thought they were leaving the country. Sylvie could empathise more than most - parental domestic violence and alcohol abuse meant she was in care as a child. Which is why we should listen particularly hard when she says:

“Every child deserves the same chance to live, and to thrive. It’s not acceptable that we just keep a whole group of children treading water...it would be terrible to give up on these kids.”

For some children, growing up in London is a dangerous, bewildering and painful experience. Some have parents who are unable or unwilling to look after them. Others might experience terrible difficulties at school, with mental health problems or with bullying. Research among children at the charity Kids Company found that one in five had been shot at and/or stabbed, and half had witnessed shootings or stabbings in the last year. For many more the deprivation might not be as extreme but it is almost as debilitating for their future success: leaving school unable to read or write well enough to get a job, caring for parents or siblings instead of learning or playing.

If our ‘every child’ ambition is to mean anything it must extend most actively to the most vulnerable children: every child, from whatever beginning, with whatever it takes.

A London Children’s Challenge

By the early 2000s it was widely acknowledged that children were being badly let down by the poor quality of London’s schools. In response, in 2003 Government introduced a new minister responsible for London schools, some new money and a crack team of officials in the Department of Education to lead a programme called the London Challenge. Ten years later, with London’s schools amongst the best performing in the country, the London Challenge is still hailed as a model of successful intervention.¹³

It focused on improving leadership and teacher quality but in doing so recognised that schools thrive when the staff and leaders feel trusted, supported and encouraged. It built partnerships between schools, often pairing better and worse performing schools which actually improved the performance of both. It built on the belief shared by teachers and local authorities that no child in London should be let down by their school.

In short, a fantastic programme that transformed education for a generation of Londoners. Its only limitation? Children spend most of their time out of school. A great education can help overcome the effects of poverty or neglect at home but is no replacement for preventing them in the first place and for some children will never be enough.

Nowhere has recognised this more famously than New York's Harlem Children's Zone. Fed up with the duplication, gaps and inconsistencies in the myriad of public and philanthropic services trying to cater for children in the 100-block area of Harlem, its founder set out to weave them together into a coherent 'pipeline' from cradle to career. Schools were vital but so were charities, local care services, and parents and families themselves.

Several organisations have attempted to bring the approach to the UK, including Only Connect via their West London Children's Zone, and Save the Children. The model cannot be imported wholesale - services and jurisdictions are different - but the principle of joining up services in a 'doubly holistic' way, across all ages from 0 - 18 and across all domains - can be replicated here. Save the Children have laid out in detail how to transfer the model to a UK context, emphasising the involvement of local leaders, particularly local authorities and schools, and a robust governance structure.¹⁴

Perhaps we could learn from the best of the London Challenge and the Harlem approach. A London Children's Challenge would extend the Challenge model beyond schools to the coordination of wider services for children particularly in the most disadvantaged areas. It would combine expert advice with peer support and some resource to bring together different services, similar to that which Save the Children have provided for some areas under their Children's Communities programme. Led from City Hall and adopting the same positive, supportive tone (in contrast to much of the rhetoric around child protection, which operates in a climate of political fear) it would champion not just schooling but the wider protection and support of London's children.

A London Children's Challenge would extend the Challenge model beyond schools to the coordination of wider services for children particularly in the most disadvantaged areas.

Other cities have shown how heavy investment in the lives of struggling children can pay off. Boston's Thrive in Five initiative aims to ensure every child is ready to start school aged five; it has brought together agencies and organisations across the city to create 'ready families, ready educators, ready systems and a ready city.'¹⁵ San Antonio has pursued a similar goal under its SA2020 plan,¹⁶ as has Hartford with its Mayor's Cabinet for Young Children - a cross-sector group of public sector, charity and business leaders in the city, appointed by the Mayor. They provide high level policy recommendations for the Mayor and oversee budgets for programmes that serve young children across the city.¹⁷

In Cincinnati, an ambitious programme called Strive brought together over 300 city departments, charities, businesses, universities and schools to improve all aspects of services for children 'from cradle to career'. They reimaged the system piece by piece; performance improved across a vast range of measures.¹⁸

Through the London Children Challenge areas and elsewhere the Mayor should champion four vital issues for London's children

Eradicate illiteracy

The London Evening Standard launched the Get London Reading campaign in 2011 with the news that 1 in 4 children left primary school unable to read properly. The campaign has gathered huge momentum since then but too many children still leave school unable to read and write well enough to thrive in adulthood. In West Dunbartonshire, renowned child psychologist Tommy Mackay has shown that it is possible not just to tackle illiteracy but to eradicate it.¹⁹ We should seize the opportunity and aim for the same in London, redoubling our efforts and, following Tommy Mackay's lead, setting out to change attitudes as well as provide one-on-one support for those who need it most.

Every child mentored, every child a mentor

Several contributors to Changing London outlined the enormous benefits of mentoring schemes for children who “do not know about their city, or even worse are afraid of it” and for mentors who experience a whole new side to London. Gracia McGrath challenged the next Mayor to become a mentor himself, to ‘see the city through the eyes of a child.’

Extending this theme, Ellie Robinson argued that “having a mentor can transform a childhood - building confidence, extending networks, eroding inequality” and wondered whether we could extend these benefits across the capital through a voluntary mentoring scheme in every school. Crucially children would have the opportunity to be trained as mentors and to be mentored themselves, because giving support is just as valuable as receiving it.

Some children will need far more than a mentor alone can provide but establishing it as a right would guarantee every child the minimum of one supportive, trusted relationship, and a role providing the same for others when the time comes.

Shrink the foster care waiting list to zero

Mentoring is for everyone but fostering is mercifully rare. How we care for children whose parents can't or won't is a defining feature of a civilised society and yet - as Mandy Wilkins pointed out - there are over 1000 children in need of foster care in London.²⁰

A concerted campaign could see the fostering waiting list reduced to zero by the end of the Mayoralty. We should allow ourselves no leniency - in a city of eight million people it is not unreasonable to believe we can find families for 1000 extremely vulnerable children.

Marjorie Fry once observed “You cannot give a child love by act of parliament”. Nor can you by mayoral decree, but Mandy's piece concluded with some very practical ways in which City Hall - leading by example - could champion fostering amongst its own employees: active promotion, time off to go through the assessment and training, flexible working. Then she suggested that “the Mayor should use his or her voice to encourage other public, private and third sector employers to follow suit, as has been done with the Living Wage campaign.”

In a city of eight million people it is not unreasonable to believe we can find families for 1000 extremely vulnerable children.

Coordinate child protection

Even better would be to prevent children needing foster care in the first place. Matthew Downie outlined some of the specific challenges London faces in protecting our children: “gang violence and sexual abuse within gangs; abuse of children through belief in spirit possession and witchcraft; and the problem of mobile and transient families where children at risk of abuse move frequently and easily across the city.”

He says, “The prevalence and seriousness of the issue commands political attention across local and national government, but so far not from either of the two Mayors of London. Why not?”

We could learn from successful programmes in other cities like New York’s Blue Sky programme, or Manchester’s co-commissioning of children’s services across multiple local authorities. It is a complex topic with no easy solutions but it is surely incumbent on our city’s leaders to do their best for children who need protecting.

For every child: the first step into a career

A Youth Compact with business

A ten year old in our children's discussion group in east London suggested schools make better links with banks so he and his peers could better understand how to work in one.

It is sobering to learn that work experience and the worry of getting a good job should feature in a child's concerns alongside the availability of fizzy drinks. But it is also a sign of just how important access to the right job can be for children and their families.

For a minority of our children the path from school to college, perhaps to university and then on to the first rung of a good career is well-paved, assisted along the way by good schooling, inspiring work experience, family connections, and perhaps an unpaid internship or two.

For others the transition into work is difficult and traumatic, often unfulfilling and sometimes impossible - unemployment amongst under-25s in London stands at 25%.²¹ With young people arriving in London from all over the UK the competition for jobs at this level is fierce.

Much of the onus with this agenda lies with employers but a Mayor exploiting the influence their position brings could encourage, cajole and coerce.

The first step is to discover what is out there. Sally Rogers described how, "When children from working class families in places like Newham grow up and – aged 15 or 16 – are sent off for a couple of weeks work experience...they end up spending two weeks stacking shelves in Shoe Zone. These kids – far more than their rich contemporaries – need experiences of work that inspire and excite. Two weeks shelf stacking won't do that."

A few years later, unpaid internships for many of the top professions exclude those who cannot afford to work for free. Informal advertising of entry-level jobs is a further bar to those who haven't had access to the internships or family connections where these crucial networks are built up.

Instead, too many find themselves stuck in insecure, temporary, badly paid jobs with no training and no path for promotion or advancement. Apprenticeships traditionally provided a surefire route for those who didn't go to university and there has been a recent revival in interest, but there is far more a dedicated Mayor could do.

Public sector employers are already beginning to lead the way. Barts NHS Trust, for example, offers apprenticeships to local residents, including into new areas such as operating theatres, pathology labs and the outpatients department. As Andrew Attfield says, “if the NHS can do this at a time of great pressure on its services, other sectors should be able to do so much more.”

Much of the onus with this agenda lies with employers but a Mayor exploiting the influence their position brings could encourage, cajole and coerce. Setting the agenda with a few of London’s largest employers could transform the rest.

Responsible employers would do three things for young people starting out in their careers:

- 1) **Provide meaningful work experience in non entry-level jobs** for young people from local schools. The number of placements could be a fixed proportion of their number of employees, or their turnover.
- 2) **Offer apprenticeships** in an ambitious range of roles for young people particularly local to the area where the employer is based. Again, the number could be in proportion to the size of the organisation.
- 3) **Only offer internships that are fairly recruited**, with fair remuneration of at least the minimum wage, and clear contracts.

A driven Mayor would have a range of tools at their disposal. Direct influence over parts of the public sector would mean the Police and Transport for London could blaze the trail. Other public services including the NHS and local authorities could be quickly signed up particularly because many meet these criteria already. They could be extended to companies contracted to provide public services.

As for private sector employers, a future paper will cover in more detail the Mayor’s relationship with business. A thoughtful Mayor with a campaigning mindset and a willingness to engage provocatively with businesses could skillfully convene and cajole around some core themes. A Mayor’s Compact with Business could include a set of pledges with which members must adhere; “First steps into a career” could be one of these. Others could include: paying a living wage; paying fair tax; and including an employee representative on the board to restrain pay inequality.

If necessary, institutions could be built to help promote these aims, including for example a London Interns Service advertising decent opportunities and allowing participants to rate employers, or an OFSTED-style mechanism for holding employers to account in how they support young people into work, as suggested by Jamie Audsley and Emily Benn.

For every child: a decent income and good home

An astonishing 36% of London's children live in poverty: their parents trapped by low wages, insecure and insufficient jobs and high prices. Our status as 'child poverty capital of the UK' should be a source of acute shame for a city that has much else to be proud of.

For a Mayor who has little direct influence over wages, benefit and tax rates that directly affect income this can seem at first glance a hard problem to tackle. One approach is to make income matter less. Opening up public space, banning advertising near schools, or increasing access to the arts means that a child's experiences are less dependent on their parents' income. Kate Bell has called this a process of 'de-commodifying' the experience of childhood: narrowing the spheres in which family income determines a child's life chances.²²

But a visionary leader does more than mitigate the effect of gross inequality. New York's Bill de Blasio won his mayoral election by exposing the pernicious effect of the gap between rich and poor on one of the world's few other western megacities; it will surely feature equally prominently in London's upcoming vote. We touch on some ideas below but will devote an entire paper to the issue in the next few months.

Our status as 'child poverty capital of the UK' should be a source of acute shame for a city that has much else to be proud of...a visionary leader must do more than mitigate the effect of gross inequality.

A London Child Trust Fund

The Child Trust Fund was described as 'the most successful savings scheme there has ever been.'²³ On the birth of a new child, parents were entitled to claim a small payment from government into a ring-fenced bank account, which they could then add to. In a few years time that first generation of newborns will turn 18 and gain access to the accrued savings. Assets which - research suggests - are vital for a successful transition to adulthood. Sadly the impact will be short lived because the scheme was cancelled in 2010.

But in the meantime San Francisco's Mayor Gavin Newsom launched something similar just for his city.²⁴ Under the 'Kindergarten to College' programme, every child starting kindergarten receives \$50 in a special bank account (\$100 for children receiving free school meals) to be used to help pay for the costs of college when they reach 18.

It acts as seed funding; under a deal between the city and some of its biggest corporations, private sector contributors then match any additional money put into the account by parents or the child themselves, up to \$100. Another \$100 is added if

people enroll for monthly deposits. The city and private contributions are reclaimed if not used for college-related expenses before the child reaches 25, but people keep any family contributions. Fully launched in 2012, the accounts now reach 8,000 children with 4,700 opening each year.

Mayor Newsom has proved that where Government won't step up, a city leader can. We have some of the world's biggest corporations in our city – there is nothing stopping a ground-breaking partnership of this kind taking off here. On its own a London Child Trust Fund will not transform our city overnight but it will endow the next generation of Londoners with vital assets with which to begin their journey.

Higher pay for the lowest paid

Many of the ideas in this section don't apply specifically to children but it would be nonsensical for a paper on London childhoods not to touch on income and inequality. We will return to it in far more detail in a future paper.

Londoners know all too well the costs of bringing up children in the UK's most expensive city. The London Living Wage is set by the Greater London Authority each year as the minimum hourly income needed to get by and yet one in five workers is paid less than its current rate of £8.80 per hour. Both London's Mayors to date have been enthusiastic supporters of the Living Wage and 200 employers are now formally committed to paying it - including the GLA - but as the current Mayor admits, there is a long way to go to reach his target that the Living Wage is 'the norm across the capital' by 2020.²⁵

As Megan Jarvie explained, mothers are less likely to work in London than in the rest of the country, which goes some way to explaining high levels of child poverty. The high costs of childcare (the average annual bill for full-time childcare for a two year old is £14,000) and housing and the lack of well paid, part time jobs all stand in the way. Almost half of part time workers earn less than the Living Wage, so a strong focus on improving earnings in these jobs would disproportionately help families.

We suggest the next Mayor redouble their efforts to get the Living Wage adopted across the city, including in a Mayor's Compact with Business as suggested in the previous section. More than half the low-paid jobs in London are in the retail and wholesale, or restaurant and hotel sectors, presenting an obvious target for a concerted campaign.²⁶

Meanwhile, raising the minimum wage would bring more workers closer to the living wage rate, and Kitty Ussher's research for Centre for London has shown that a 41p per hour rise in the minimum wage in London would leave it economically equivalent to the national rate of £6.31. Ultimately London's rate could be 20% higher than the rest of the UK. The Mayor should lead the charge for central Government to introduce a London minimum wage rate and work with the Low Pay Commission to set it.

For many Londoners even the minimum wage would be an improvement on their current illegally-low pay. A recent study in Newham estimated that 20% of workers were paid less than the minimum wage.²⁷ Boroughs including Newham have called for the right to enforce the minimum wage themselves; the Mayor should support them in this campaign.

The city of Gothenburg in Sweden has taken a radically different route. They are trialing a new 30-hour week, on full pay, for public sector workers. Outcomes in the trial department will be tracked over a year and compared against those of a control department.²⁸ A shorter working week on the same total pay equates to a rise in per-hour pay and - Gothenburg hopes - brings other benefits too including higher productivity and fewer absences from work. It would also make it easier to raise a family, leaving parents less reliant on expensive childcare and with more time to spend with the kids. The next Mayor should consider a similar trial within the public sector, learning from Gothenburg's experience and the work of the New Economics Foundation in the UK, who have led the argument for shortening the working week.

Improve London's housing

This, again, will be tackled in a future paper but it is worth pointing to a few measures that would have a dramatic impact on London's families. With a quarter of London households now living in the private rented sector,²⁹ secure rental contracts would immeasurably benefit children who can settle in a school and a community instead of suffering disruptive moves at short notice at the whim of exploitative landlords. More social housing would stop families being driven into the private sector in the first place. And - as Robbie de Santos argued - more homes for middle income families would stop communities fragmenting as new parents are forced to move far out into the suburbs to afford housing.

Holding to account

The financial sector dominates London's economy and yet too few of us are able to hold it to account, to understand and question the financial system and its key institutions. Jamie Audsley and Emily Benn suggested embedding education about London's economy, its financial system and the ability to critique it directly into the curriculum, equipping young people with 'knowledge and skills about the reality of the city as it currently is' and the tools to change it in the future.

For every child: the right to be heard

A London Young Mayor

“Young people tell me constantly that they want to be part of the solution to the challenges facing London – not seen as one of the problems,” said Rosie Ferguson in one of the first contributions to Changing London. “Yet there is a disconnect between young people’s intrinsic passion for changing things and their ability to connect and see relevance to formal political structures; and this is why they are angry.”

A future paper will look at how we can ensure London’s democracy is a thriving, continuous process of engagement rather than a staid election every four years, and harnessing the ideas and energy of children and young people will be at its core.

But the idea of allowing those under 16 the chance to elect their own representative is an obvious first step towards introducing a greater say for children and young people - the only group currently denied any formal say in the running of our city.

“Young people tell me constantly that they want to be part of the solution to the challenges facing London – not seen as one of the problems.”

Rosie Ferguson

Child and Young Mayors are increasingly popular around the country including in several London boroughs, but we propose a small twist: restrict the vote to those aged under 16 but allow candidates of any age to put themselves forward. After all, children and young people should be able to elect the person who they think best represents their views, irrespective of age. It is the exclusion from the democratic process of those aged under 16, not the age of the person elected, that deprives children of a voice.

Leeds has a Child Mayor, as part of its bid to become a child friendly city. Year Six pupil Charlotte Williams gained thousands of votes for her ideas including to get more people cycling to coincide with the Tour de France’s visit to Leeds in 2014. The city’s child-friendly efforts began when they asked thousands of young people how the city could be improved, and distilled the answers down to 12 wishes. Top of the list; safe ways to get around the city, a centre that’s welcoming, safe and with plenty to do. Charlotte now leads the charge.³⁰

A London Mayor for Children and Young People would represent the views of all those aged under 16 in City Hall and more widely. They would have a significant budget and take on or share responsibility for those parts of the Mayor’s portfolio concerned with children and young people. They could be scrutinised by a panel of children and young people, perhaps including the young Mayors of those boroughs which have them.

Conclusion

The London Mayoralty is an idiosyncratic institution. The Mayor holds the UK's largest directly elected mandate but limited formal powers outside of transport, policing and planning. This constrains their control - which is why future incumbents will surely join their predecessors in calling for more devolution of power from central government - but it does not diminish their influence.

This is just one possible vision but we think it is powerful and ambitious: a city re-oriented around our children, guaranteeing the next generation a set of rights for which they could hold us to account. A great place to grow up.

On the contrary it presents a political opportunity: unencumbered by the breadth and depth of responsibility borne by central government or local authorities, the Mayor is free to beat a different path. Politicians contesting these traditional elections care about children but rarely stray beyond the major services which they will have to provide - schools, child protection, perhaps childcare. In contrast a putative Mayor can tell a new story, not forgetting schools and social services but not limited to them either; weaving a vision that includes streets and parks, business and charities, housing and income, art and culture, participation and learning. He or she can lay out a vision rather than promise a set of services, and use their status to draw others in, challenge them where necessary and together craft a different city.

Based on dozens of contributions to Changing London over the last six months we have begun to lay out how such a vision could look but there is far more to say.

If you'd like to join the discussion, to suggest an idea, improve or disagree with something we have suggested, or tell us your favorite, please get in touch. We are particularly keen to post blogs in response to the paper.

We launched Changing London in the hope that the next Mayoral election could herald a new type of politics. Not just a personality contest or an argument about bus fares - important as they are - but a real debate over the kind of city we want to live in and the Mayor's role in leading us there. This is just one possible vision but we think it is powerful and ambitious: a city re-oriented around our children, guaranteeing the next generation a set of rights for which they could hold us to account. A great place to grow up.

References

For full references please contact will.horwitz@change-london.org.uk

- 1) London Poverty Profile: <http://www.londonpovertyprofile.org.uk/indicators/topics/income-poverty/londons-poverty-rate/>
- 2) Yougov, 2014
- 3) <http://www.citylab.com/commute/2013/12/how-few-dutch-children-fought-street-where-they-could-play-and-won/7855/>
- 4) Eg see http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/children_shealth/10654330/Streets-are-alive-with-the-sound-of-children-playing.html
- 5) <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/cdn/static/cms/documents/rtf-report-executive-summary.pdf>
- 6) <http://www.carfreeday.org.uk/traffic-community-research.aspx>
- 7) <http://www.citylab.com/housing/2013/10/sociologists-defense-cul-de-sac/7262/>
- 8) http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/sampson/files/when_disaster_strikes.pdf
- 9) See <http://playingout.net> and <http://www.londonplay.org.uk/>
- 10) <http://www.rotterdam.nl/JOS/kindvriendelijk/Rotterdam%20City%20with%20a%20future.pdf>
- 11) <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/apr/20/ban-outdoor-advertising> and <http://www.amusingplanet.com/2013/07/sao-paulo-city-with-no-outdoor.html>
- 12) <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/page/leisure-and-culture/make-sunday-special>
- 13) <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/london-challenge>
- 14) <http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/Developing-Childrens-Zones-summary.pdf>
- 15) <http://www.nlc.org/find-city-solutions/institute-for-youth-education-and-families/early-childhood/new-case-studies-on-educational-alignment-for-young-children>
- 16) <http://www.sa2020.org/what-is-sa2020/>
- 17) <http://www.nlc.org/find-city-solutions/institute-for-youth-education-and-families/early-childhood/new-case-studies-on-educational-alignment-for-young-children>
- 18) http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/collective_impact
- 19) See Gordon Brown's Britain's Everyday Heroes
- 20) <https://www.fostering.net/media/2014/thousands-new-foster-families-needed-in-2014#.UuelI9VwbnB>
- 21) <http://www.londonpovertyprofile.org.uk/indicators/topics/work-and-worklessness/young-adult-unemployment-over-time/>
- 22) <http://www.fabians.org.uk/investing-in-childhood/>
- 23) <http://www.theguardian.com/money/2010/may/25/child-trust-funds-zoe-williams>

- 24) <http://mycfuture.org/research/publications/innovation-and-the-city>
- 25) <https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/living-wage-2013.pdf>
- 26) <http://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Low-Pay-and-the-London-Living-Wage-GLA-Trust-for-London-2013.pdf>
- 27) http://www.newhamrecorder.co.uk/news/features/newham_mayor_sir_robin_wales_is_cracking_down_on_poverty_pay_1_3366508
- 28) <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/sweden-to-trial-six-hour-public-sector-workday-9248009.html>
- 29) <http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-social-sciences/social-policy/CHASM/briefing-papers/2013/trends-private-rented-sector.pdf>
- 30) <http://www.yorkshireeveningpost.co.uk/news/latest-news/top-stories/pedal-power-is-top-priority-for-new-leeds-children-s-mayor-1-6240259>

“ If we can build a successful city for children, we will have a successful city for all people.”

Enrique Peñalosa

What if the Mayor, its businesses, public services, charities and citizens determined to make London the greatest place on Earth to raise a child?

The London Mayor holds the UK's biggest directly elected mandate. We should expect an ambition that matches the scale of the opportunity. It should be bold and deep-rooted and, above all, it should be ours.

This paper draws on the ideas contributed to the Changing London blog over the winter of 2013/14 to propose one possible vision for London's next Mayor: a city re-oriented around our children, guaranteeing the next generation a set of rights for which they could hold us to account. A great place to grow up.

It is the first in a series of six papers we will release over the next six months, each on a different theme, all with the aim of stimulating a debate on a more ambitious vision for our city, in advance of London's Mayoral election in 2016.

Please join us at www.change-london.org.uk to suggest an idea, improve or disagree with something we have proposed, or tell us your favorite. We are particularly keen to post blogs in response to the paper.

change-london.org.uk

The headline typeface used throughout this report is Claredon, a traditional slab serif created by Robert Besely in London in the 1800s. A printer and civic activist, he went on to become Sheriff of the City of London in 1863 and the Lord Mayor of London in 1869.

—

Design by *alexparrott.co.uk*