

## Police Report

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This is my first year on the CGCA Executive committee. When I was elected last year my main concern for the area was the alarming increase in drug abuse and all the crime attached to it. I have attended many local Police and Project Lilac meetings to try to get an open view as to what is going on and how we can make our area a better and safer place to live.

I can only conclude that the past year has seen a frightening increase of drug abuse. Project Lilac has only highlighted the problems we are having in our area. With all the good will of the officers on the team, we constantly have more statistics about the problem but no conclusion on how to contain it.

We have met with St Mungo Hostel in Endell Street. St Mungo's has been in the area for a long time with the intent of housing homeless people to enable them to get a job and move on to better things. Nowadays it is full of homeless drug abusers. Over sixty regular drug users who think they have a right to make this area their home. They are supplied with clean needles, available at the hostel, and are constantly shooting up all over the area, particularly Dudley Court, Winter Garden House and the Drury Lane Moat House Hotel complex.

In my opinion, it is irresponsible to house these people in an area visited by endless numbers of tourists who are only too willing to part with their euros for the chance to buy our local addicts a nice shot of heroin. Add that to the endless number of drug dealers ready to supply the goods to them and, if all fails, you can always put a window through. About 90 of them in four streets off the Seven

Dials alone in the past year (multiply that by all the streets in Covent Garden and you can see how bad it is).

The area also received publicity in the front page of the Daily Mail in February, with a full page photograph of a drain in Tower Court containing some 50 used needles. What a wonderful advertisement for our area!

More of us have to get involved. Please contact me through the CGCA if you wish to help.

*Malcolm Davey*

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Once again, the overriding problem in Covent Garden is a lack of visible policing, resulting in a visible increase in drug users and dealers. When we lobbied for the money for Project Lilac, I was very excited and certainly felt confident that there would be a marked improvement.

Yes, within the immediate area there no doubt was an improvement, but the two disturbing aspects that were deeply unwelcome was the inevitable and devastating displacement to areas previously not known for their drug abuse and, secondly, this established an even wider area for use and abuse, way beyond the original project boundaries that Lilac was called in to deal with. Areas known to have little or no policing, which have come to light as a result and now fast becoming well established.

One of the other problems with Lilac was what appeared to be its emphasis on the users and their possible treatments, rather than the impact on the community.

In a recent letter to one of our local newspapers it was pointed out that there has been a monopoly in the debate and decision making process concerning services for and treatment of drug addicts. It would appear that the 'health professionals', service providers and 'drug action team' representatives have been very focused on part of the overall issue, mainly in the form of lobbying for and on behalf of registered addicts, and that the people most directly affected by their decisions, their lobbying, their client addicts and their steering groups – our local community – have had very little recognition or sympathy.

The local community is often being made to feel bad about commenting on the ever growing band of addicts, that to complain is negative and that we should be grateful we have somewhere to live, etc. Certainly we should, and most of us are, but it is very dispiriting when you try hard to get your act together, provide for yourself and try and maintain a certain standard to be accused, in so many words, of being selfish, hardhearted, etc for not embracing a needle exchange, for example. Throughout the entire operation we felt the Police did a very good job, but too many others jumped on the bandwagon, all so-called experts. So, the result was that a situation developed of 'them and us' and the people who lobbied in the first place for the funding were down the ladder of these elite, highly qualified expert experts, who do, after all, know best.