



Monitoring Olympics policing during the 2012 'Security Games'

A report on community-based legal observing organised by

newham
monitoring
project

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Monitoring Olympics policing during the 2012 'Security Games'

In the months before the start of the 2012 Olympics in Stratford in east London, there was a growing anxiety amongst Londoners about the prospect of snipers in helicopters and RAF fighters in the skies, missile launchers on tower blocks and repeated predictions that Newham would experience lockdown during peak periods. Newham Monitoring Project had also been receiving enquiries from across east London for months from local residents, particularly those working with young people, who were concerned about the massive proposed policing operation and its impact at street level. London 2012 seemed to deserve its reputation as the first 'Security Games'.



The Olympics presented the largest peacetime military and security operation since 1945, with a policing and security budget of around £553m. From 2010, the number of security personnel required by Olympic organisers rose sharply to an estimated 23,700 on the busiest days, more than double the original predictions, with up to 12,000 police from forces across the country and the Ministry of Defence providing more troops deployed (in uniform) to work during the Games than were then stationed in Afghanistan. Even more CCTV was installed in a city that already had the highest level of surveillance of its citizens than anywhere in the world, whilst around £80 million was spent on the construction of an 11-mile long 5000-volt electric fence around the Olympic zone.

The reason for this extraordinary level of security, the Home Office argued in its March 2011 publication 'Olympic and Paralympic Safety and Security Strategy,'¹ was primarily the threat from terrorism: it promised 'maximum use of existing national security and intelligence structures' with the threat-level raised from 'substantial' to 'severe' (which assumes 'an attack is highly likely'). A secondary threat was public disorder, heightened by the perception of a weak police response to rioting the previous summer that followed the death of Mark Duggan in August 2011.² The International Olympic Committee had made it clear after the riots that it expected the British government, the Metropolitan police and other domestic agencies to ensure that the Olympics passed off without incident.³ Arrangements were made to fast-track the trials of people accused of offences linked to the Olympics in the same highly controversial way that had followed the disorder of the previous year, with Alison Saunders, the chief CPS prosecutor for London, explicitly linking these measures to 'the lessons of the summer riots.'⁴

With a climate of fear slowly building through state institutions and the media, we were also aware of the significant pattern of racialised social 'sanitisation' and exploitation that have been a hallmark of sport mega events globally, particularly where they have been held in poorer and developing areas. Activists and academics from countries including South Africa and India, which have both hosted major sport events in recent years, travelled to the UK to share their experiences of human rights abuses and 'sweep up operations' in their localities. These had had a massively detrimental and often devastating impact on the lives of local people, leaving them

1 Available online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/london-2012-olympic-paralympic-safety-security-strategy>

2 See BBC News: 'Riots report: Public lacked faith in police response' <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-15913881>

3 'London riots will not affect 2012 Olympic security, says IOC', the *Guardian*, Tuesday 9 August 2011

4 'Fast-track court system planned for London Olympics', the *Guardian*, Tuesday 26 June 2012

homeless, unemployed or vulnerable to excessive policing or criminalisation, with a legacy of property developers and real estate owners benefiting most. These were real life stories behind the promises of employment and regeneration that had been made in each host city.

We recognised that an atmosphere of intensive security, focused on the borough where Newham Monitoring Project has worked for over thirty years, had the potential to negatively impact on local people. Most military and all private security personnel would work inside the 'ticketed areas' of the event venues, but in the streets surrounding the Olympic Park in Stratford and the ExCel Centre in Canning Town, it was the prospect of a massive policing operation that was our greatest concern. Newham is one of London's poorest and most ethnically diverse boroughs with the second highest Muslim population in the UK, one that had experienced long-term state surveillance, suspicion and incidents like the bungled anti-terrorism raids in 2006 on two families living in Forest Gate, who endured a terrifying ordeal based on faulty intelligence.⁵ The borough also has one of the youngest populations in London, with 23.6% of residents in 2011 aged between 10 and 24,⁶ coupled with a long history of difficult relationships between young people and the police. This is particularly the case over the use of stop and search powers.

The final report⁷ of the Riots Communities and Victims Panel, set up to investigate the causes of the 2011 riots, said of stop and search that it was 'cited as a major source of discontent with the police,' adding:

Notably, this concern was voiced by young black men living in London with whom the Panel engaged, who felt that searches were not always carried out with appropriate respect. We were told that, in at least some instances, this was a motivating factor in the riots, including for some of the attacks on the police... This viewpoint was shared in many of the local reports that the Panel has read.

We have long been worried that, despite the low level of arrests that result from the use of stop and search powers, the consequence of their repeated use – and targeting of particular individuals – is the criminalisation of young people. In its own report into the rioting in London, entitled 'Four days in August', the Metropolitan police let slip its view that 'a history of being stopped and searched' was an indicator of potential criminality.⁸ Before the Games, there were already acute concerns about the use of stop and search powers locally. Newham's police had carried out an inordinately high level of controversial section 60 searches compared to other neighbouring boroughs, which unlike other police stop and search powers, do not require an officer to justify having a 'reasonable suspicion' that a person may be about to commit a crime. The searches are the most prone to accusations of racial profiling – and increased by a staggering 2,540% in Newham from 2007-2010.⁹

NMP's own casework included support for one young man, Mauro Demetrio, who alleged he had been racially abused after he was stopped in his car, arrested and placed in a police van the day after the 2011 riots – we helped him to make his case public after the Crown Prosecution Service refused to prosecute the officers responsible.¹⁰ Following a public outcry and a review of the

5 See BBC News: 'Police criticised for terror raid' <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6356931.stm>

6 See 'Key Statistics 2013', Aston-Mansfield Community Involvement Unit, available at <http://www.aston-mansfield.org.uk/what-we-do/community-involvement-unit/ciu-publications/>

7 'After the Riots' – archived at <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20121003195935/http://riotspanel.independent.gov.uk>

8 Metropolitan Police, 'Four days in August' <http://content.met.police.uk/News/MPS-report-into-summer-disorder/1400007360193/1257246745756>

9 See the final report of Newham council's Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Commission 'Review of Stop and Search Procedures in Newham', November 2011, available from <http://www.blowe.org.uk/2011/11/whats-in-newhams-stop-search-scrutiny.html>

10 See <http://www.nmp.org.uk/2012/03/east-london-police-officer-taped-in.html> and 'Police face racism scandal after black man records abuse', the *Guardian* 30 March 2012 <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2012/mar/30/police-racism-black-man-abuse>

case, the CPS reversed its decision and, in May 2012, a wave of other cases came forward totalling 51 allegations of racism by police officers, sparking a series of reviews and a number of suspensions.¹¹ This case, whilst shocking, was also sadly reminiscent of reports we have received for years from young people, particularly from black and minority backgrounds, about their treatment at the hands of the police. The only difference was that Mauro Demetrio had managed to capture his experience on his mobile phone.

Our concerns about the Olympics policing operation was that Newham teenagers (many of whom live in temporary or overcrowded homes) enjoying the long summer break from school would inevitably be out on the streets and were likely to become targets for stops and searches. In addition, although the majority would not have tickets for Olympic events, many would gravitate out of curiosity towards Stratford, which had already become a magnet for young people with the opening of the Westfield Stratford City shopping mall.

The Metropolitan police clearly shared this view: in May 2012, it confirmed a three month dispersal zone that would 'specifically cover Stratford Town Centre, including the Magistrates' Court, the main transport hubs in Stratford and the areas along West Ham Lane commonly known as the West Quadrant'.¹² This was extended for a further three months in August 2012 and enabled police officers or Police Community Support Officers to order a group of two or more people to leave the area and, if they don't live within it, to ban them from returning for up to 24 hours.

Research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRT)¹³ has shown that dispersal orders risk displacing crime to the immediately surrounding neighbourhoods and tend to have the impact of stigmatising all young people as potential perpetrators of anti-social behaviour, although they are most likely to be its victims:

Dispersal orders potentially criminalise youthful behaviour on the basis of the anxieties that young people congregating in groups may generate among other people. As such, the power is potentially less concerned with the agency of individuals than the assumptions that are made about what they might do.

For many, meeting friends and peers in local public spaces constitutes a fundamental aspect of developing their sense of identity and control, as well as providing space in which to forge their independent capacity to manage risk and danger.

In the months before the Olympics, the police sent what JRT describes as a 'symbolic message' to the area's residents to stay away from public spaces, seemingly driven by an underlying fear – intensified by the previous summer's riots – about young people from Newham scaring visitors and upsetting the drive for the 'perfect Games'. The huge publicity and excitement that the Games had generated meant, however, that this message was unlikely to be heeded.

In planning our response to the Olympics policing operation, we felt that the rights of local people to basic civil liberties, like freedom of movement and association, unrestricted by harassment or intimidation, should be vigorously defended. Early on, we decided to monitor and record concerns about the local impact of the Olympics policing and security measures, with three key objectives:

11 'Watchdog receives 51 allegations of Met police racism in two months', the *Guardian* 31 May 2012
<http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2012/may/31/watchdog-51-allegations-met-racism>

12 See <http://www.nmp.org.uk/2012/05/police-announce-olympic-dispersal-zone.html>

13 'The Use and Impact of Dispersal Orders', Joseph Rowntree Foundation, October 2007
<http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/use-and-impact-dispersal-orders>

- Strengthening the response of Newham communities and young people
- Monitoring and challenging unfair or discriminatory practices
- Co-ordinating a community-led response in partnership with others

We began to promote the need to monitor the Olympics policing operations for the duration of the Games and in April 2012, in a *Guardian* 'Comment is Free' article,¹⁴ we announced that we planned to use volunteer Community Legal Observers on the ground:

With systems of accountability as weak as they usually seem, we are doing all we can to reach out to and strengthen the response of local black and minority communities in advance of the Olympics, by disseminating rights information, providing support and recruiting volunteers to monitor the police on the ground.

This report documents the experiences of local people, particularly in relation to policing, as witnessed by our team of volunteers. It also sets out our experiences over the course of the Olympics and Paralympics during the summer of 2012 and what lessons others can draw for organising community-based monitoring of the policing of major events.

¹⁴ 'Total policing' at London 2012 is a recipe for more racial discrimination, Estelle du Boulay, the *Guardian* 6 April 2012 <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/apr/06/total-policing-london-2012-olympics-racial>

Community Legal Observers during the Olympics



Community Legal Observer volunteers at the photo-call in Stratford on 27 July 2012

In May 2012, NMP put out a call for volunteers to monitor the Olympics policing operation as trained Community Legal Observers. This went out to our existing supporters, on our website, via social media and through the established networks we are part of, particularly the organisations that make up the Network for Police Monitoring (NetPol). It was also picked up by campaigners from the Counter Olympics Network. The result was phenomenal: over 100 people volunteered for training, which took place at the Harold Road Community Centre on 9th and 15th June.

The training sessions set out the role of a Community Legal Observer (CLO), which was to:

- Monitor the policing of the community, especially the use by police of controversial tactics such as stop and search and dispersal zones.
- Act as a deterrent to police misbehaviour, by wearing hi-visibility bibs and reminding individual police officers that their actions are monitored.
- Reassure and inform people of their basic legal rights, by distributing rights cards that include NMP's 34-hour emergency helpline number to call for advice or in the event of an arrest.
- Monitor arrests, by recording anything witnessed during an arrest and by assisting an arrestee to obtain legal representation.
- Record details of suspected assaults on people by police and attempts to obtain statements from any witnesses.

We also made it clear that when acting as a CLO and wearing an identifiable CLO bib, volunteers were not activists, lawyers, negotiators with the police, spokespersons for the local community, stewards or medics. CLOs have no legal status, are not immune from arrest and do not provide 'legal advice' – they instead provide support and assistance on legal issues from a community perspective.

The training covered the Olympic 'landscape', laws specific to the Games and an overview of human rights issues and the law in relation to stop and search powers, dispersal zones, curfew powers, arrest and detention. We also explained how NMP would coordinate and support the Community Legal Observer team.

Volunteer shifts began on Friday 27th July, the evening of the Opening Ceremony, with a photo-call in Theatre Square in Stratford and CLOs handing out NMP's new stop and search rights card in their distinctive red bibs outside Stratford station.

Throughout the Olympics, an average of 10 volunteers in small teams covered four shifts over a daily 12 hour period, and volunteers distributed over 7,000 rights cards to local people. CLOs also spent a considerable portion of their time talking to people about their rights and their concerns.



Community Legal Observer teams reported regularly to the NMP office, where volunteers and staff logged incidents on a daily timeline using a model of back-office support developed by Green and Black Cross for legal observation at demonstrations and protests.

The response of the local community



Alongside our monitoring of central Stratford near the Olympic Park and outside the LiveSites (the council-managed screens in local parks), time spent on estates and residential areas talking to local people, especially youths and their parents, indicated overwhelming support for the Community Legal Observers project. By going out to meet people where they live, we were able to build up a unique insight about policing on the Olympic periphery and meet young people who challenged commonly held stereotypes about, in particular, young men hanging out on the street – everyday we were met with some of the most engaged and reflective responses.

We spoke to people from a range of race, ethnicity and faith backgrounds. The common view of young people we spoke to was that while the police presence had increased during the Olympics, their ongoing contact with police, long before the start of the Games, was already abnormally high and any additional targeting they faced was 'nothing new'. Many said they were frequently stopped and searched, sometimes daily and more than once. They felt that the police target 'known faces' and many expected to be stopped if they were in groups of two or more. We were also notified of a number of alleged assaults by officers and also house raids carried out on grounds that concerned us.

The rights cards we distributed were well received and discussions with local people about their experiences with the police proved very productive. Young black people in particular expressed their concerns and anxieties about stop and search. Whilst some were unaware of their rights in relation to providing their names and addresses, others told us that in reality it was impossible to invoke this right because where they had done so before, they had been threatened with arrest.

Our CLOs handed out rights cards to a group of ten 14 year-old Asian boys, who appeared very excited to use the information provided the next time they are stopped by the police. A few days later, the boys met the same CLOs again and told them that they had been stopped and searched several times since the first encounter with our volunteers and that they told the police officers it is their right not to give them their names and addresses. However, they had relented and given this information as a result of feeling intimidated. One officer told them, 'these won't take you anywhere', as he took the rights cards off each of them.

The group was given new rights cards and saved NMP's Emergency Helpline number in their mobile phones. Our CLOs also led a stop and search role play exercise with them, which provided an opportunity to understand and more easily remember what they should be told by a police officer who stops them, what their rights are and the importance of getting a receipt at the end of the search. The boys agreed to participate in a stop and search workshop organised by NMP and offered to let all their friends know about their rights and about NMP's helpline number.

During another shift, our CLOs spoke with a small group of young men who said that they are constantly harassed by the police. One told the CLOs that during a stop-and-account, he suddenly sneezed. This annoyed the police officers who had stopped him and, as a result, he was issued with a penalty notice for spitting. Another young male says he was routinely targeted on suspicion of drug dealing, despite the fact that he has no criminal history related to drugs.

We received a high number of reports of young men being routinely strip-searched in the back of vans, which is alarming, but sadly corresponds with feedback we had gathered through our existing community outreach with young people. This issue seemed to have been largely unreported because many young people were unaware that this practice is illegal and that strip searches should only take place in custody under the authorisation of a custody sergeant. However, many told us that if offered the choice between this kind of search in the back of the van or in a custody suite, they felt a greater threat from being taken to a police station and would opt for the former.

People we spoke to were reluctant to talk extensively and in detail about how the searches were conducted and we are concerned that a combination of embarrassment and lack of rights-awareness is preventing stories like these from entering the public domain. Since last summer, we have raised this issue with the Independent Police Complaints Commission.

The response of the police

NMP contacted the local police prior to the start of the project and received a written assurance our presence would be welcomed and facilitated.

At the start of the Olympics, most police officers at street-level seemed to have no idea who we were or what we were doing. They seemed to accept our presence for the first few days but a notable shift occurred once it became apparent we were monitoring their activities for the duration of the Games and intended to take our role seriously. Although we were still greeted regularly by police, volunteers also endured sarcasm and criticism, including negative comments about their role (and the odd rude hand gesture). One officer behaved particularly aggressively towards CLOs observing vehicle stops, demanding to know 'what kind of legal training do you have'.

On a number of occasions, police officers attempted to press CLOs to provide their personal details, several times claiming that they were required to do so as 'police witnesses' in circumstances where they had not witnessed any incident. We suspected these requests were little more than attempts to intimidate our volunteers.

We were repeatedly told by young people that police officers confiscated NMP's rights cards from them when they were stopped.

On Monday 6 August, police told CLOs that they were now excluded from any Transport for London land (including the bus station) because of allegedly 'aggressive behaviour' when observing a stop and search.

The response of the local council

Unfortunately, Newham council was actively obstructive. On 30 July, security working for the council prevented a group of Community Legal Observers from entering the LiveSite public screening of Olympic events at Stratford Park, accusing the CLOs of 'making it easy for criminals and giving them tips' by handing out rights-information cards about stop and search to members of the public. NMP sent an email immediately to the council's Head of Events, Sue Meiners, explaining the purpose of our project and raising a complaint about this incident. However, volunteers on a subsequent shift, who had managed to enter the park, were asked to leave by Ms Meiners because NMP's rights cards were considered 'litter'. They offered to stop handing out cards but were still told to leave.¹⁵

NMP complained to the council about the exclusion of our volunteers and the worrying attitude of security guards towards the members of the public using the park. Unfortunately, the council then provided us with another, entirely different justification for the banning of volunteers engaged in informing local people about their legal rights. Its Head of Communications, Douglas Trainer, claimed that the live-screen park areas were part of a 'corporate event' and that as a result, the council does not allow organisations 'to come into the park with a branded presence – including the wearing of branded shirts or bibs.'¹⁶

In general, we found that local authority enforcement officers and council-employed security staff had a significantly negative and antagonistic attitude towards local people, and young people in particular.

15 See <http://www.nmp.org.uk/2012/07/newham-council-bans-human-rights-legal.html>

16 See <http://www.nmp.org.uk/2012/08/newham-council-responds-to-complaint.html>

What our monitoring revealed

The use of stop and search powers

Community Legal Observers found that police were rarely providing people with receipts when stop and search powers were used – this was recorded by our volunteers on almost every day during the Olympics. Police appeared to frequently check people's identification as if this was a matter of course rather than related to the specific grounds for the search.

CLOs spoke to large numbers of young people about the issue of whether to give police their name and address during a search (under police powers where providing this information is not required). Most young people were unaware of their rights but those who had tried to assert them and refused to give their personal details said officers threatened to arrest them or obtained their details by other means, by going through a wallet or extending the grounds of the search by suggesting an item in their possession may be stolen (forcing them to provide a name and address to prove their innocence). Many felt that knowing their rights simply wasn't enough.

Community Legal Observers spoke to one 16 year old who said that during the second week of the Olympics, he was stopped three times in one day outside Stratford Station. He told the CLOs: 'the first time I was stopped, the police officers said they were searching me for weapons. The second time it was because [of] the way I was dressed. I was told I looked like I was on something. The third time I wasn't given any reason at all.'

In some cases stop and search powers were used repeatedly by police officers so that people begin to feel harassed and deterred from gathering where they normally socialised.

CLOs spoke to three young Asian men, who said they had moved on when they realised they were being watched by the police, but that the officers continued to pursue them. They added that this has not been the first time they have been watched, stopped and searched for possession of drugs and that the previous evening, one had his phone taken from him by a police officer even though a check showed it had not been stolen.

The group said that as a result of the Olympics, they had changed their daily activities to save them from hassle from the police.

We had several reports of incidents where the use of stop and search powers led to an allegation of assault against police officers. For example, a group of young Asian boys in traditional Islamic clothing were returning home during the night from Ramadan prayers at their mosque, when the police stopped and searched 6 or 7 of the young boys in Forest Gate. One member of the group reported that he had been assaulted during this stop and search by one of the officers.

Talking to members of the public revealed that the police were still using powers under section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 (used 'in anticipation of violence').¹⁷ One individual said that he had been threatened with dispersal zone powers near Stratford Park but that officers had backed down when he stood his ground. There were reports of harassment near local shops and within Stratford Park, with the suggestion that police behaved differently in tourists areas in order not to create a negative impression.

¹⁷ See <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1994/33/section/60>

However, we also found that Olympic tourists who were stopped were provided with very little information – those we saw (or spoke to afterwards) said they were not told what power they were being stopped under: officers simply said, 'we need to search you'.

Mr A, a 45 year old tourist, was stopped and searched by two plain clothes police officers on the opening day of the Olympics on the suspicion of buying or selling tickets. At no time was information provided on his rights or the reason for the stop and search and officers also failed to give him a receipt.

It was only after speaking to one of our CLOs that Mr A went back to the officers that stopped him and obtained a receipt – and discovered why he had been stopped in the first place.

An American tourist was stopped and searched outside Stratford Picturehouse in Theatre Square, on the grounds that he was taking pictures of the parking area next to the bridge and police officers felt he was therefore acting suspiciously. The officers did not introduce themselves, they did not tell him the power they searched him under and did not issue him a receipt. They did, however, ask him for his name, date of birth and previous criminal record, none of which he was required to provide in law. CLOs gave the man information about his rights and advised him to get in touch with NMP again if he wished to pursue a complaint.

Ultimately, knowing your rights is no guarantee against a frustrating and intimidating encounter with the police. The following incident, involving a young Asian man who asserted his rights when he was stopped and searched in Stratford, encompasses many of the issues we heard about repeatedly during the Olympics:

While waiting for my partner at Stratford station, I was approached by three officers yelling 'take your hands out of your pockets'. As they gathered around me, I asked what they wanted and was told they had planned to just ask me some questions but because I was being 'aggressive' and 'anti-police' they were now going to carry out a stop and search.

One officer began the search without any explanation, so I asked why they were failing to follow 'GOWISELY' (an acronym used in police training as a reminder of information officers must provide when they perform a stop and search¹⁸). The officer was very unhappy I asked this and after consulting his colleagues, he said I was suspected of placing drugs in my socks. Officers were very rude as they then began the search and asked many questions, which I chose not to answer. They also threatened me with arrest when I refused to provide my name and address.

My partner arrived as the search was almost completed. As I explained what had happened, one of the officers called out to her: 'does he lie like this to you all the time?' They then said I was free to leave but I reminded them that they had forgotten to offer me a record of the search and I wanted one. The officers kept insisting to my partner 'he is free to go, he is a free man' but she politely said, 'I think he wants his receipt, even if we're late'. One of the officers then filled in a search record and handed it to me, which said I had been seen pulling up my socks and had appeared agitated around a sniffer dog – which hadn't even arrived until after the search had begun. I immediately challenged the search record and

¹⁸ See <http://scontutor.wordpress.com/2012/11/16/sneak-preview-of-sc-resource-centre-post-stop-and-search/>

said it was false. One officer again told my partner that I was a liar and walked away to write up his notes. Luckily I had paper and a pen with me and was able to note the officers' badge numbers. I am now pursuing a formal complaint.

The young man is a caseworker for Newham Monitoring Project, providing advice and training on police stop and search powers. It is hardly surprising that, in similar circumstances, someone who is far less confident about their rights would find those rights are ignored.

The treatment of homeless people

During the Olympics, the dispersal zone in Stratford targeted not only young people, but anyone deemed undesirable to the image of the Olympics, especially the homeless.

We observed police stopping homeless people on most days, usually to try to move them on. Those we spoke to said they were approached by police continually and many complained of aggressive treatment by police officers:

On the third day of the Olympics, three officers from the Territorial Support Group (the Metropolitan Police's specialist public order unit) attempted to arrest a homeless Eastern European man for drunkenness in a public place. When CLOs arrived, the man was lying on the ground, disorientated and largely unresponsive.

The police officers were visibly unhappy with the presence of the CLOs, calling the volunteers 'useless' for being unable to assist homeless people, even after they explained this was quite obviously not part of their community legal observing role. The police officers then promptly left, offering no explanation why they had initially attempted to arrest the man, sarcastically adding 'they will look after you' and pointing at the CLOs. Dismissively leaving a distressed member of the public in this way was extremely unprofessional, but fortunately our CLOs were able to provide some help after the police left, providing water and directing him to a place to sleep.

On another occasion, the day before the Closing Ceremony, our CLOs intervened to prevent police officers and security staff, who also appeared to be involved in the 'clean-up' operation around Stratford station, from removing and destroying a homeless man's sleeping bag and ground sheet. The security staff responded contemptuously to the idea that the homeless might have a right to their possessions and had we not stepped in, there seems little doubt that these items would have been confiscated.

Later, during the Paralympics, a homeless man who spends most of his time around Stratford was abused and punched in the chest because of his homelessness. He reported the incident to the police, describing his attacker as a well-dressed man in a suit, but rather than dealing effectively with the assault, the homeless man was himself threatened with arrest.

Arrests

The arrests our CLOs witnessed near the Olympic Park were carried out by large numbers of officers – often groups in excess of 10. There were arrests for alleged ticket touting on most days. One man who spoke to us after his release said that the custody sergeant at the police station he was taken to had refused to let him call our Emergency Helpline number to request a lawyer.

Other arrests were more typical of our ongoing casework – and were just as arbitrary:

A 20 year old young black man was waiting to be let into his friend's house but was arrested by plain clothed police officers for acting suspiciously. His friends informed officers that they knew him but the police continued to put him into handcuffs and call for back-up. His friends managed to film him protesting that he did not understand why he was being arrested and then being carried to the police van.

At the police station he was told he had been stopped for public disorder and swearing, but he was not charged. He went on to pursue a complaint against the police over his treatment.

Organising community legal observation – what we learnt

Local information is essential

Before the start of the Olympics, our expectation was that the massive increase in security associated with the Games would exacerbate existing concerns about oppressive local policing, rather than necessarily create entirely new ones. As a casework-based civil rights organisation with more than 30 years of experience working in the main Olympic host borough, we had a wealth of knowledge that provided a local context so that our CLOs had some idea of what they might expect. It meant, for example, that we already had a clear picture of hotspot areas for the use of police powers of stop and search and of the policing of dispersal zones in the borough.

Most local communities outside of east London do not have organisations with NMP's remit, which means that other organisers of community legal observing will need to allocate time and resources to talk to those most affected by heavy-handed local policing – young people in general, and members of black communities (especially young men) in particular. Gathering information and trends about people's experiences of the police is a vital part of planning CLO training.



It is worthwhile recruiting and training as large a pool of volunteers as possible

Unlike legal observing during a demonstration or protest, where the commitment of volunteers is measured in hours, NMP faced drawing up a rota covering up to 12 hours a day for the six week duration of the Games, involving teams of at least three CLOs. Whilst some of our student volunteers were able to give more time over the summer, others were only available for evening shifts. We were, therefore, fortunate to attract over 100 people to take part in CLO training. This meant that we had a larger pool of volunteers to draw upon, with 83 people participating in rota shifts. The volunteers who came forward were diverse in terms of age, ethnicity and included teachers, lawyers, students, local residents and activists.

It was important to ensure CLO training focused on observation and common sense

CLOs are not lawyers and our training emphasised that their role was to gather evidence rather than to intervene, which means that specialist legal experience was unnecessary. Anyone could participate – volunteers simply needed common sense, an ability to keep calm and a preparedness to record whatever they witnessed. Whilst the training provided background on issues most likely to affect local residents, especially young people, it also focused on what to record if witnessing an arrest, how to recognise different police ranks and how to deal with confrontational behaviour by individual officers.

The most experienced legal observers are needed at the start

It was helpful to have more seasoned CLOs acting as team leaders and out on the streets with

new volunteers on the first days of legal observing, when we were unclear about the police reaction to an initiative they had not encountered before. In practice this meant at least one member of NMP's staff team and volunteers who had previously taken part in legal observation for Green and Black Cross (GBC Legal) during protests. The first evening, with the Olympics opening ceremony, was exceptionally busy because of the decision by the police to arrest and detain a large number of cyclists taking part in a Critical Mass ride. However, we were just as concerned about documenting the lower-profile, day-to-day incidents, and the presence of experienced volunteers helped to build the confidence of the CLO teams to deal with the situations that had been outlined during the training.

Community Legal Observing is not just documenting incidents but talking to people

Time spent talking to local people about their experiences and handing out rights cards was just as valuable as the monitoring of police activity. This is part of the expanded role of CLOs that differentiates them from legal observers at protests, and our volunteers told us this was the most enjoyable part of their shifts:

No one ever responded negatively, about 50% with curiosity, wanting to know more, and a great many with delight that such a project existed...

I got the sense from many I spoke to that in discovering there were actions they could take to protect their rights, and that there was an organisation out there to support them, they felt empowered again to stand up for themselves when they felt they were being treated unfairly.

The cards we handed out had become well recognised by the final shifts I did. On more than one occasion I offered out cards to be told that the person I was offering it to already had one, or their friends had one and they knew what it was about.

Back office support for volunteers on the streets is essential

NMP adopted some of the evolving good practice used by GBC Legal (borrowing with permission from the GBC London guide for regional groups) to ensure CLOs had constant contact with a staffed office for support and guidance and to report regularly on what they had seen and heard. This was covered by at least one member of the NMP staff team and ensured we were able to analyse trends and, when necessary, follow up with more detailed legal advice or referrals to solicitors in the event of an arrest.

Recording a timeline helps to manage evidence gathered

Again, NMP drew upon the experience of GBC Legal in using a very detailed timeline of events consisting of Back Office call logs, CLO notes and, on occasion, emails from members of the public. One volunteer was responsible for coordinating the daily updating of the timeline spreadsheet, on which all evidence gathered was noted. This included descriptions of individual encounters with officers, incidents of the use of police powers, details of changes in police presence or movements of vehicles, CLOs perceptions of the general mood or level of tension and any community feedback received.

Regular volunteer meetings and feedback are essential

We encouraged volunteers to phone in with emerging developments during each shift and also

provided a simple template to help CLOs type up their notes. It was also helpful to have a dedicated email address – we set up olympics@nmp.org.uk – to ensure that incoming information was directed to the volunteer coordinating evidence and added to the timeline every day. In addition, we held weekly open meetings for volunteers to address their experiences during shifts, address specific concerns and debate changing tactics by CLO teams.



'Cycle patrols' by CLOs enabled us to cover far more ground

One of the ideas that emerged from the weekly CLO meetings was to organise CLO shifts with teams of cyclists, which would enable volunteers to cover a far larger area. This was a major success: it meant that CLOs were able to respond quickly to information picked up from talking to local people and on a number of occasions, to attend and witness incidents in the streets and estates well away from the main Olympic venues.

A celebration of our CLO volunteers' work was important and uplifting

After volunteers had worked so closely together, it was important to organise an event at the end of the Olympics and Paralympics period to thank everyone for their commitment and hard work over the summer. This took place a few weeks after the Games were over and included a first look at some of the key trends that emerged from the evidence gathered. CLOs also received a surprise memento of their volunteering during August and September – a medal bearing the famous 'human rights salute' protest by Tommie Smith, John Carlos and Peter Norman at the 1968 Mexico Olympic Games.



APPENDIX 1: The Olympics – a day-by-day breakdown

This section documents notable events and a sample of the many accounts reported back to NMP by Community Legal Observers 'on the ground' during the Olympics. In many cases, these are first-hand eye-witness accounts from contemporaneous notes that are reproduced verbatim in the interests of transparency. We have made every effort to ensure accuracy, often comparing multiple accounts of one incident and have ensured that confidentiality is protected in all cases. Whilst volunteers worked to a very high standard ensuring they concentrated on documenting facts, there may in places be errors or inaccuracies for which we can accept no liability.

Friday 27 July 2012

Opening Ceremony

On the opening day of the world's biggest international sporting event one particular incident dominated the attention of our Community Legal Observers and caseworkers. After monitoring two peaceful protests in Stratford during the day (an RMT protest at the station and a Tamil demonstration at the top of Burford Road), CLOs witnessed the arrest that evening of 183 Critical Mass cyclists, many on Stratford High Street. When asked for the reasons for the arrests, one officer said 'I can arrest you all, so count yourself lucky.' NMP coordinated with Green and Black Cross Legal who provided arrestee support and coordinated with lawyers.

Our CLOs monitored the use of stop and search powers on three tourists on suspicion of ticket touting, who were also threatened with dispersal orders. The plain-clothed police officers who carried out the searches failed to issue a receipt until prompted by CLOs.

Generally, a significant number of police officers with machine guns were patrolling the Stratford station and Westfield area, police clusters were positioned in the same areas and police sniffer dogs were inspecting parked bicycles outside the station.

Saturday 28 July 2012

There was an almost non-existent police presence in the early afternoon, away from the entrance to Stratford station, but at 3.30pm in Stratford Park, CLOs noted an increase in the numbers of members of the public and, consequently, the police presence was high. A teenage girl in light summer dress was being repeatedly swiped in what appeared to be an unprofessional manner with a hand-held metal detector by a male security guard.

Towards the end of the day in Leytonstone, while a homeless man was being searched by police, two of his female friends were being disturbed and harassed by two intoxicated men, causing them a great deal of distress. The two men consequently stated that they were off-duty police officers. The police eventually arrived at the scene and the two 'off-duty officers' were questioned. A member of the public started recording this, but one of the attending officers took away his phone and deleted the video. After insisting he had every right to record a police officer in the course of his duty, the officer became increasingly angry and shouted at him to 'get back.'

Sunday 29 July 2012

In the morning of the second day of the Olympic Games, our CLOs monitored a stop and search carried out on four Romanian men. Later on, a stop and search pickpocketing operation was carried out at Stratford Bus Station in the early afternoon, which appeared to be targeting eastern Europeans.

CLOs also monitored the 'Open our Towpath' protest on Bow Road, Stratford High Street and heading towards Carpenters Road. At Abbey Lane, the police presence was very high but no problems were recorded.

A young Asian man contacted NMP regarding the sudden presence of a police officer outside a house he was at, who was repeatedly knocking on the door and asking him to come out 'for a chat' but would not explain any further what it was about. The police officer had left a mobile number and was spending the day waiting in a car parked outside the house. NMP contacted the officer by phone and explained that his presence and behaviour was of concern and that he should explain what he wanted, allowing the man to make an informed decision about what to do. The officer refused to give further details but passed NMP's details on to a more senior officer who called back later to also suggest the man come out to speak to the police. This officer was reluctant to identify which branch of the police he was from but briefly stated the issue was to do with the Olympics and that he was from SO15. NMP pointed out that this is the anti-terrorist branch and stated it would be advising the man to seek legal representation for any meeting with the police. The man was then able to proceed with support and the issue resolved; no case was brought against him.

Monday 30 July 2012

A young African man riding his bike attempted to enter Stratford Park where he had been eating his lunch every day for years. There were no notices in place informing visitors that search points had been installed in the park for the duration of the Olympic and Paralympic Live Screening. A security guard jumped in front of the young man, grabbed hold of his bike and refused to allow him to enter the park. Our CLOs spoke to the young man and gave him a rights card.

As the CLOs went back into Stratford Park after ending the conversation with the young man, the security guards asked for some of our cards. Consequently, the next group of CLOs that tried to enter the park in the afternoon were banned for 'making it easier for criminals and giving them tips.' **See page 9 for further details**

In the evening, an arrest took place by the entrance of Westfield Shopping Centre. Two white males (non-British by accent) were detained and questioned by ten police officers who were subsequently joined by four other officers and then a further seven – making a total of 21 police officers for an arrest of two people. The two men were arrested for theft.

Tuesday 31 July 2012

Territorial Support Group officers carried out 'Operation Cubo'¹⁹ stops and searches on vehicles at the junction of Romford Road and Vicarage Lane (close to Bow County Court). Our CLOs monitored the operation from 11am until 1.20pm when the operation stopped. They handed out rights cards to drivers and passengers after it had finished.

Most drivers that were stopped were either black or Asian. When three people were arrested, our CLOs asked the arresting officer what police station they would be taken to. He refused to disclose this information, and threatened the CLO with arrest.

Wednesday 1 August 2012

Police Community Support Officers conducted a stop and search on Prince Regent Lane, although they are only lawfully entitled to carry out a stop and account and not a search. All vehicles passing through the junction of Tollgate Road and Prince Regent Lane were checked by the police.

¹⁹ See <http://content.met.police.uk/News/Newham-police-seize-55-vehicles/1400009503899/1257246745756>

At Stratford Bus Station, police officers appeared to be very defensive about our CLOs writing down their badge numbers, despite the fact that the badge number is public information.

Thursday 2 August 2012

Our CLOs were approached by officers outside Stratford Police Station who asked our volunteers to stop making a note of car registration numbers, although no legal grounds were given.

Around ExCel and along Royal Victoria station, officers from Derbyshire Police Constabulary were patrolling the area.

Members of a faith group called 'Team Islam', who were handing out leaflets outside Stratford station, said the police had been trying to get rid of them from the space at the bottom of the steps up towards Westfield Shopping Centre since 27 July, although all other faith campaigning groups had not been challenged. They were forbidden from using loudspeakers or megaphones, although Christian campaigners used theirs. They were also advised to 'keep away' from Christian groups, although our CLOs had monitored good-natured discussions between the two faith groups.

One police officer talking to CLOs in Stratford said, 'you make our lives difficult,' whilst a female officer standing with a large group of other officers said 'let's move away from these guys' when seeing our volunteers on duty.

Towards the end of the day, a group of Asian boys, all under 18, were arrested near Stratford Station. The police presence was very high: five vans were parked outside Stratford Shopping Centre and about 14 officers visible. None were local officers but from Hounslow (TX), Merton (VW) and Wandsworth (WW) and none were prepared to give information to our CLOs about the reasons for the arrests.

Friday 3 August 2012

CLOs distributed rights cards and spoke to young people about their rights inside the Focus E15 foyer in Stratford, which provides both flats for young parents and an open door service for young people who want access to employment and training services. The manager was keen to find out more about NMP to include information in workshops for young people who live at Focus E15.

An American tourist was stopped and searched outside Stratford Picturehouse in Theatre Square, on the grounds that he was taking pictures of the parking area next to the bridge and police officers felt he was therefore acting suspiciously. The officers did not introduce themselves, they did not tell him the power they were searching him under and did not issue him a receipt. They did, however, ask him for his name, date of birth and previous criminal record, none of which he was required to give, although he was not aware of this. CLOs gave the man information about his rights and advised him to get in touch with NMP again if he wished to pursue a complaint.

An arrest took place opposite the Stratford shopping centre, where a woman was handcuffed because she was found in possession of a knife with which she was cutting bread. CLOs witnessed the arrest. The police officers tried to insist they become witnesses, demanding their names and addresses.

A young Asian man was stopped and chased by the police as he refused to give his name and address.

Around Stratford station there were three other incidents involving stop and search and one involving stop and account

Five Asian boys, three of whom CLOs had organised an impromptu stop and search street role-play exercise for, were arrested at Stratford station. **See page 8 for further details**

Saturday 4 August 2012

This day marked the one year anniversary since the death of Mark Duggan. The morning started quietly but the police presence near Stratford, especially plain-clothed officers, increased throughout the day. CLOs handed out rights cards to young people in local barber shops, which were enthusiastically received. An older Caribbean man was sceptical about making complaints against the police, saying any complaint would be disregarded due to the colour of his skin. CLOs also met with youth workers from Community Links who took rights cards to pass on to the young people they work with.

A young white boy, aged around 15, was stopped five times on that day and said he was intimidated by heavily armed police. He also said that police were 'targeting known faces.'

A young black man reported an intimidating stop by six officers in Stratford Park, on the grounds that they suspected his bike was stolen. He felt the bust cards held important and empowering information for him and friends.

Saturday 4 August 2012

CLOs witnessed armed police stopping and searching a man for taking photos of the Olympic site. They did not inform him of the powers they were using, the grounds for the search, their badge numbers or the station they were based at. They also failed to provide him with a receipt.

An Asian man approached CLOs to tell them about a stop and search outside his house.

A young man told CLOs he had been picked out from a large crowd by police and stopped. No reason was offered by the officers and he assumed it related to his clothes and cap.

A black teenager responded to a CLO offering a rights card by saying 'give me one of those, you people saved my life a few days ago. I'll give it to my friend.'

CLOs spoke to security staff at Stratford Park, who reported a large number of 'snatches' by police outside the park. One said it was a shame he could only arrest people in the park. When questioned on his use of the term 'arrest,' he said he could detain people indefinitely until the police arrived, and considered this comparable to the power of arrest.

CLOs observed the stop and search of a Nigerian man by police interested in his video camera. The officers asked our volunteers how they 'rated police performance' and expressed gratitude for the assistance CLOs provided the previous evening to a woman who was distressed and intoxicated. CLOs felt that officers were deliberately trying to distract them from monitoring the stop and search taking place.

CLOs observed a Polish man who was stopped by police. He told our volunteers that he had been asked to leave the area for 24 hours because he had been standing some paces away from his bag.

CLOs trying to observe a man stopped and searched on suspicion of ticket touting were obstructed by Transport for London staff when the search was moved into Stratford station. They

were also told to remove their tabards. After complying, CLOs were then told they could not make notes. A police officer then informed volunteers they were in breach of Transport for London by-laws and threatened them with arrest.

Sunday 5 August 2012

CLOs observed police officers stopping a Romanian man carrying a television, on suspicion of theft. The TV had come from a skip and the man was taken in a police van to show officers where he had found it. The same CLOs found him later that day, released without charge – he brought them a bag of croissants as a gift for the help they had provided.

CLOs noted officers with machine guns were patrolling crowds but that one was not displaying his shoulder identification number.

Monday 6 August 2012

There was a generally calm atmosphere all day with lower police levels than over the weekend, although the number of private security staff remained the same. There were very few people, particularly young people, on the streets in the area around Stratford.

A mother approached CLOs for support from NMP for her sons who had been arrested the previous night for racially abusive behaviour. She said she and her sons had frequently been victims of racial abuse and had reported it many times. She believed the allegations were false. Although there was a solicitor present she was keen to have the support of NMP.

CLOs were told by police that they were excluded from any Transport for London land (including the bus station). One officer alleged previously 'aggressive behaviour' when observing a stop and search, claiming the decision to prevent volunteers from monitoring the incident had been to 'protect the suspect's privacy' (regardless of the individual's wishes). The search had yielded no results. The officer added that the police would move further searches into restricted areas (such as TfL property) to prevent future CLO observation.

Two London Borough of Newham Law Enforcement officers stopped a young couple for littering, videoed their identifications and fined them £50.

Monday 6 August 2012

CLOs noted that officers from West Mercia Police were inconsistent in displaying their shoulder identification numbers and saw armed police whose shoulder numbers were not clearly visible.

CLOs spoke to a black woman who had complained to police about being pushed around by G4S security staff.

CLOs observed a vehicle stop of five young Asian men by six officers for suspicious behaviour (indicating in opposite direction to route taken). All five were searched and volunteers noted that one was subjected to an identification check. Two receipts were requested. There were no cautions or arrests.

Volunteers observed the arrest of an older black man, who was removed in a van for alleged drunkenness in a public place. He complained his arm had been hurt by the officers.

There was a consistently positive reaction from local people and from Olympics volunteers receiving NMP's rights cards. People taking the cards frequently offered recollections of police related experiences where the information on the cards would have been relevant and useful.

In Leytonstone, a mixed-race man in his 20s waiting for a friend to let him in to his house was stopped, handcuffed and searched on the floor by plain-clothed officers for 'suspicious behaviour'. His friends, who were shocked at the rough treatment, filmed the search. The man was then taken to the police station despite it being unclear whether he was under arrest. NMP provided follow-up support.

Tuesday 7 August 2012

It was a generally quiet day, which CLOs spent handing out rights cards and talking to local people. There was one stop and account, instigated by private security staff after a discussion with individuals filming 'Team Islam' in Stratford. Police were heard referring to Team Islam as 'the Mujahadeens, or Mujas, or whatever they're called.'

CLOs spoke to a Transport for London security staff member about his role. He in turn explained the close cooperation between different security groups and the existence of an 'invisible line' in Meridian Square to separate large groups of Muslims and Christians.

Wednesday 8 August 2012

A young man recounted to CLOs how his wrist was broken when he was arrested. He was subsequently released without charge.

Large numbers of officers were observed conducting a vehicle stop and search operation. Police were checking driving documents under section 164 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 and the passport of at least one of the drivers. CLOs handed rights cards to a group of black 14 year old boys who had been watching the police operation and one made a comment, using strong language and laughter, that the cards should also be given to the police. Officers who heard this came over and grabbed the boy from his bike. They demanded his name and address under section 50 of the Police Reform Act, which is designed to prevent anti-social behaviour (defined as activities likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to others). The boy was briefly handcuffed, but his restraints were then removed while his personal details and bike were checked and his phone was taken. The boys were eventually allowed to leave without arrest, with officers threatening the group that they would be informing their parents and suggesting they drive them home. They declined and obtained a receipt of the search. One of our CLOs felt that: 'It appeared that the police, once they had stopped this boy and his friends, were trying to find something to do them for.'

Officers in a police van were noted keenly watching three young Asian men waiting for a bus. When two began walking away, they were followed by an officer. The man remaining at the bus stop was approached by CLOs and said his friends had left to avoid hassle and dispersal as they are constantly watched, stopped and searched for drugs. He had himself been stopped the previous night and had the ownership of his phone checked.

A group of young Asian boys told CLOs that they had been stopped and searched the night before due to a robbery in the area by people their age.

An officer behaved aggressively towards CLOs observing vehicle stops, demanding to know 'what kind of legal training have you had.'

Discussions by CLOs with members of the public revealed the police were using section 50 powers (for anti-social behaviour) and powers under section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 (used 'in anticipation of violence'). One individual said he had been threatened with dispersal zone powers near Stratford Park but officers had backed down when he stood his ground. There were reports of harassment near local shops and within Stratford Park, with the suggestion police behaved differently in tourists areas to avoid creating a negative impression.

One individual reported carrying a bust card at all times and expressed interest in volunteering with NMP.

Wednesday 8 August 2012

A group of young black men reported constant stops and that groups of two or more were dispersed, although they generally tried to stay away from the police to avoid being searched. They admitted submitting to voluntary strip searches in vans because 'once they get you to the police station, you don't get out.' Although they were aware they were not obliged to give their names when they were stopped, they explained that if they refused the police would look at their phones and, if registered under a different name, arrest them for theft. They expressed the belief that the increased police presence was associated with increased hassle from the police.

Local authority enforcement officers and police were observed conducting an identification check on an Asian market stall holder. One enforcement officer explained to a CLO that the police were called for non-compliant stall holders and the volunteer reported that this appeared to be accepted by stall holders as standard procedure.

CLOs had a request from a youth worker for a visit from NMP to their youth group, where young black men expressed the opinion that the Olympics were being used as an excuse to hassle them more. Some individuals had been stopped under section 60, the police telling them that 'they don't want us there.'

A local authority enforcement officer told a CLO about violence in the area, saying 'you can get stopped or you can get stabbed,' expressing the opinion that everyone should be stopped all the time.

CLOs spent time speaking to young people. One young Asian man told our volunteers he felt discriminated against by security guards at Westfield who objected to him walking slowly up the steps to the entrance. A group of young people reported that the police were removing NMP's rights cards from them when stopped. Another group of 15 year old girls said they were stopped and searched almost every day and that it had become worse during the Olympics period, while a group of men in their late 20s and early 30s also reported daily stops and searches. One black man said he felt racially profiled and although before the Olympics, he and his friends were stopped in groups of three or more, since late July he was just as likely to face a stop and search on his own or with one other person. One Asian man told the CLOs that he felt unduly harassed because he and his friends were stopped but never charged. He also expressed the belief that he had been targeted because of his religion and dress. Another recounted detention without charge for two days. They believed NMP and the CLOs were doing an important job and noted the CLOs were often present at recent stops.

Thursday 9 August 2012

Transport for London cleaners held a peaceful picket outside Stratford station. There was an incident with a protester who was abused by a member of the public and who complained to police. This was initially disregarded until other officers corroborated the complaint. A member of the press was asked by officers to stop taking photos, until CLOs intervened and checked with the protester that he was happy to be photographed.

A group of young boys who had previously spoken to CLOs and taken rights cards reported a later stop and search on suspicion of theft during which officers took the cards from them, remarking 'they will never get them anywhere.' The boys said that rights cards are consistently removed from them during searches by police. They also said that they are stopped and searched daily during Ramadan when they are en route to and from Taraweeh (evening prayers)

and in groups of young friends. They felt targeted both because they are Asian and young (all were around 14 years old) and because they were walking around in groups of two or more. They had only heard an explanation of the legal powers used by officers against them when one of them was eventually arrested despite saying he had only witnessed an incident. The boy described feeling 'instantly criminalised' by his treatment and by officers taking DNA samples.

A group of young black men reported stops and searches on a regular basis, sometimes several times in one day. They were very sceptical about the prospect of changing what they saw as discriminatory and racist targeting, or what change or help CLOs could bring about by legal observing, one saying that 'only wealth can provide protection.'

Another group of young men also said they were regularly stopped and searched and that increased police numbers for the Olympics made little difference to the attention they received from the police every day. One wanted to challenge the police to justify a spot fine and another the constant harassment he received despite having no criminal history. Both were responsive to and positive about NMP and the CLO project.

CLOs witnessed police officers questioning a small group of young Asian boys in a bullying manner, asking for names and addresses. The boys later described this as representative of their normal interactions with the police. They seemed intimidated until informed of their rights and given rights cards. Officers then moved on.

Friday 10 August 2012

CLOs witnessed an incident between two individuals that led to an arrest. Two officers handled the situation before a larger number of officers arrived on the scene. Our volunteers were then pressured to act as witnesses but declined to do so.

Later, CLOs spoke with a young man who said the Olympics had provided few jobs for people in the area, despite them applying for work. He had been threatened with arrest the previous night at Stratford station when topping up his Oyster card, for commenting to a volunteer that 'the Olympics are shit.'

Friday 10 August 2012

CLOs also spoke with a young black man who had been arrested because he fitted the description of someone suspected of a crime locally. He had cooperated fully with police and was released, awaiting CCTV footage that would eventually clear him. He told our volunteers how he had been stabbed when he was 14 years old. This violent assault had not taken place in Newham but he still felt unsafe in Stratford, which had not been helped by the treatment he routinely received from the police.

Officers were observed enforcing the decision by security staff to refuse entry into Stratford Park of a Polish man wanting to take his usual short-cut home as he was allegedly tipsy and 'rude to security.' He shouted 'I'm not a criminal' as he was manhandled out of the park by officers and refused to take another route. The police kept repeating to him that the park was private property. A total of five officers threatened him with arrest but finally escorted him across the park.

A police officer was observed by CLOs placing a sleeping bag and ground sheet into a rubbish sack whilst an onlooking security guard laughed, saying 'you're destroying someone's home.' CLOs challenged this behaviour and were later able to find the homeless man and reunite him with his possessions.

Volunteers visited a playground and handed out rights cards to over 25 people, meeting a warm, positive response from a diverse ethnic mix of parents of all ages.

Saturday 11 August 2012

CLOs spoke to an older white man who had lived in Stratford all his life. He felt that young people and ethnic minorities were targeted by police and that abusive behaviour tended to come from younger officers. He argued that less rudeness and aggression by the police would create more trust and better relations between them and the wider community.

Rights cards were given to a security officer of a local college who reported that students were often targeted in stop and searches and that he had observed this during college break times. He was nervous to get personally involved but happy to be able to pass on the information.

A CLO was approached by a photographer who felt he had been badly treated by security at the live screen in Victoria Park in Tower Hamlets.

Sunday 12 August 2012

Closing Ceremony

It was relatively quiet earlier in the day with few people around, although a young girl, part of a group of 12-14 year olds keen to take rights cards from CLOs, reported witnessing many stops and searches that day near to Bow County Court. CLOs spent much of the day talking to people and handing out rights cards – the only people to decline to take them were two women who explained they were plain clothes police officers.

A Tamil hunger strike protest on Stratford High Street proceeded peacefully with minimal visible monitoring by police.

A young black man in his 20s approached CLOs after receiving a rights card from a friend. He had recently been forced to call an ambulance after suffering an asthma attack, but instead two police cars arrived, handcuffed him and took him to the station. His DNA was taken but he still had no idea of the reason for his detention and had been told no legal aid was available until after the Olympics.

There was a very large police presence in Morrissons car park in Stratford later in the day because of a pre-arranged protest, opened with public prayers, of a large group of Muslim men with a banner reading 'Teams of Terror.' Police vans with heavily armed officers were present but left when the group started to move, within a very tight police escort, to Meridian Square and Stratford station. They were then moved to a contained area and allowed to protest before they were escorted back to the car park within a closed cordon of officers and disbanded peacefully.

APPENDIX 2: The Paralympics – a day-by-day breakdown

Wednesday 29 August 2012

Noticeably less police presence than during the Olympic Games, with only two visible police officers outside Stratford station at 1pm on the day of the Opening Ceremony for the Paralympic Games. A Remploy protest was held outside the station that passed without incident.

There were no Community Legal Observer shifts from 30 August to 1 September 2012

Sunday 2 September 2012

CLOs spoke to a homeless man outside Stratford Shopping Centre about his experiences since the start of the Olympics. He said that there had been far more police attention on him but conversely, when he reported an assault against him by a well-dressed man who punched him in the chest, the police let his assailant go and came close to arresting him instead.

Transport for London expressed their concerns to CLOs handing out rights cards in Meridian Square in Stratford. NMP strongly believed that it had been singled out, especially as faith groups had visited the Square in large numbers on every day of the Olympics during rush hour, handing out leaflets and talking to passers-by.

Monday 3 September 2012

At the very end of Stratford bus station, where the police park their vehicles, an arrest took place in the early afternoon. The man who was arrested told CLOs that he was initially stopped by police officers who said they wanted to check on his welfare as he was limping slightly. They asked for his name and address and he gave it to them. They failed to inform the man of the reason why he was stopped and after they searched him, he was arrested on suspicion of stealing a laptop. The man informed officers about a doctor's appointment that afternoon and expressed his concern that if he was taken to the police station, he would not have access to a doctor.

Tuesday 4 September 2012

The general atmosphere was calm but CLOs had an interesting conversation with a group of 16-18 years old young people outside Stratford station. One of them said that he was stopped on average 3 to 4 times every month, and that on the second Monday of the Olympics (6 August) he had been stopped three times outside Stratford station on the same day:

The first time I was stopped, the police officers said they were searching me for weapons. The second time it was because [of] the way I was dressed. I was told I looked like I was on something. The third time I wasn't given any reason at all.

Wednesday 5 September 2012

On Ham Park Road, well away from Stratford's main shopping area or the Olympic Park, a Polish man on a motorcycle was stopped and questioned without explanation by three armed officers.

Thursday 6 September 2012

It was generally quiet on the streets with a noticeably lower police presence. CLOs spent much of their time handing out rights cards and talking to local people.

Many, particularly teenagers and both boys and girls, spoke about constantly facing stops and searches. One 15 year old boy who was given a rights card described his arrest when he became angry and started shouting after he was stopped for something he had not been involved with. He was charged when resisting arrest. CLOs were also called over by a group of young Asian boys who had many reports of abusive behaviour by officers, with some incidents filmed (this was followed up by NMP's back office support)

Three young men (one white, one black and one Asian) told CLOs that they were constantly stopped and searched and wanted to know more about NMP. One said 'keep doing this guys, I'm sure you've done a great job so far. I'll definitely check the NMP website tonight when I get home.' Another said, 'you give up your free time to do this, that's amazing.'

Friday 7 September 2012

This was a particularly quiet day in Newham, with a low police presence. CLOs continued to talk to local people and distribute rights cards.

Saturday 8 September 2012

A young Asian man told CLOs that he had been stopped and searched because of a bicycle theft. He had witnessed other cyclists stopped for the same reason on Portway in Stratford. CLOs saw a white male cyclist stopped on his bike and then allowed to move on, but a black cyclist experiencing a lengthy interrogation when he was stopped. Police officers threatened him with a fixed penalty notice for 'continuing to straddle the bike after being asked to get off it.' Officers failed to provide an explanation when questioned about the difference in treatment of the two cyclists and when asked for details about the legal basis for threatening a fixed penalty.

Otherwise there was a generally peaceful atmosphere in the Stratford area. CLOs spoke to dozens of people, many mentioning an erosion of confidence in the police and a lack of confidence in making a complaint. A Polish man said he had been stopped in Stratford every day during the Olympics period on his way back from work.

Two women took rights cards for themselves and friends saying 'this information is essential.'

Acknowledgements

Newham Monitoring Project would like to thank:

- All 83 volunteers who took part in community legal observing during the Olympics and Paralympics in August and September 2012
- NMP's staff team for the long hours and extra work they contributed from April to October 2012
- Individual supporters who donated funds to cover the costs of CLO tabards and the medals given to all volunteers.
- Green and Black Cross Legal (greenandblackcross.org/legal) for their invaluable advice and support in setting up the infrastructure and back office that made community legal observation possible.
- Carmen Enicoa and Sophia Chendoh (interns from the University of Essex) and volunteer Mary Freedman, for supporting the NMP Back Office and their massive contribution to compiling the data gathered by CLOs during the Olympic period.
- NMP volunteer Eleanor Kilroy for proofreading the report

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Published by: Newham Monitoring Project
 17 Harold Road
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 London E13 0SE
 020 8470 8333
www.nmp.org.uk
Publication date: December 2013

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