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Bold moves to help Tower Hamlets

By Scott Billings

A pioneering use of animated documentary to help alleviate anti-social behaviour in an inner-city estate is unveiled this week, following dialogue between local residents, a crime reduction service and consultancy Bold Creative.

The Crime Reduction Service for Tower Hamlets, in east London, appointed the design consultancy to help its mediation programme between groups of residents on the area's Cleveland Estate. The aim is to improve relations between younger and older residents – as well as the police – and to reduce the prevalence of anti-social behaviour, such as crime and drug use.

Building on the traditional mediation process underway for a year, Bold Creative decided to make an animated documentary presenting issues from the point of view of the young residents.

'We were trying to get people to talk and reach agreement about what they could do. The kids are not angels, but they are normal kids trying to find their place and they're excluded,' says Bold managing director Martin Orton. 'The Crime Reduction Service thought of a film as a project that would get people involved. Using animation was appealing to the kids,' he adds.

Bold engaged all sections of the community, gathering



information in interviews from 'frightened' older residents, 'disenfranchised' youths and the police.

'We took a small group of kids and held workshops with them to document the situation from their perspective. They helped our illustrators to design the film's characters and wrote the scripts themselves,' says Orton.

The monochrome design stems from a chance encounter with a Bengali kid in a white tracksuit and a white kid in a black tracksuit, he adds.

Animation allows issues to be discussed using anonymous characters into which many different views can be distilled, explains Orton. It is hoped the film will allow each section of the community to see another's point of view. 'We can interpret what people said with a certain amount of artistic licence. It is about using a balance of fantasy and reality to help make changes,' says Orton.

The finished three-minute video will be distributed on DVD to all the residents on the estate this week. It has also

been converted to the 3GP format for distribution via Bluetooth to mobile phones.

'I was impressed by the young people's commitment, energy and freshness in tackling the issues at stake, particularly in their approach in talking to older members of the community and the police.'

'The project has succeeded in bringing all sections of the community together and to talk, plan and implement solutions,' says Guy Stevenson, neighbourhood manager at Tower Hamlets Partnership.

TOWER HAMLETS FILM PROJECT

- Film promotes mediation between Cleveland Estate residents, police and local authorities
- Animation style allows anonymous characters to discuss a range of views and feelings, aiming to reduce alienation and anti-social behaviour
- Young residents worked with **Bold Creative** on designs
- DVD will be distributed to all residents