Everyday Peckham

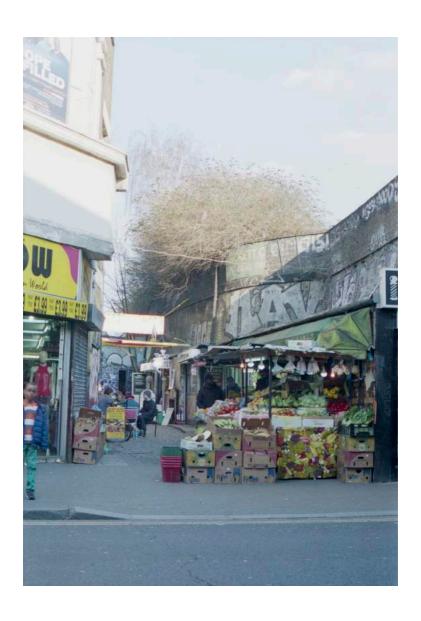
Vol. 1



Voices From Rye Lane







Contributors: Will Marks Mark Ng

Naomi Clair Seow Henry Vinten Shaylee Zaugg Anne Chataigne

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WELCOME

Everyday Peckham is a photobook expressing the everyday lives of people along Peckham Rye Lane with a design similar to that of contemporary, minimalist lifestyle magazines. Considering ordinary and diverse ways of urban life, Everyday Peckham offers a more raw, urban realistic representation of the city. In doing so, we hope to offer a fresh interpretation of the city, one that is more nuanced, varied and inclusive of everyday voices.

In a period of rapid urban change and transformation, we aim to archive the present and value the everyday, portraying a Peckham that is visibly heterogeneous, individual, varied and diverse. Combining interviews with street photography and sound recordings (available on our website), Everyday Peckham works to excavate the nuances of the area's lesser-heard people and places. Through this, Everyday Peckham offers the lens for a more nuanced reading of the city.

While we recognise that a truly unbiased rendering of the city is impossible, we have worked with an awareness of this fact and have attempted to let the voices of our interviewees speak for themselves, with no more than structural edits made to the transcribed conversations. By limiting our presence in the photobook we hope to allow these deeply personal narratives to naturally unfold.

Welcome to Everyday Peckham.

http://everydaypeckham.weebly.com/

Peckham Rye South East London



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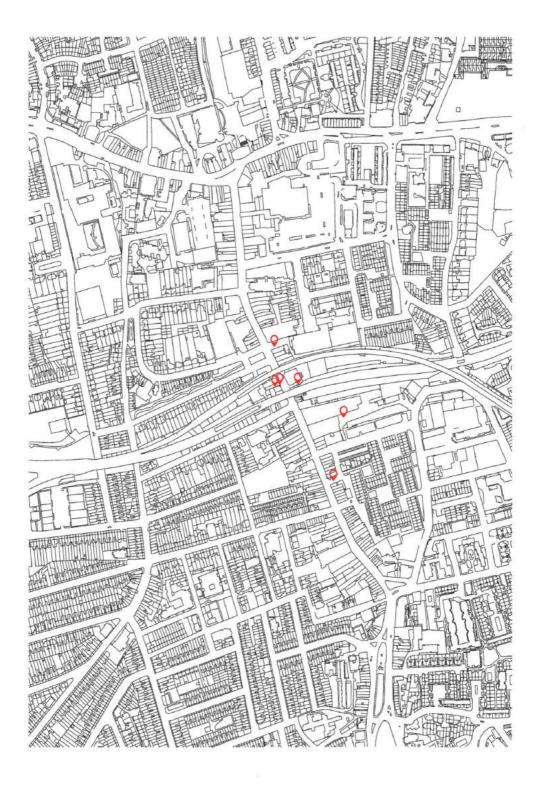






Interviews

- 1. Salas Yaiche
- 2. Qinhe Chen
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Salas Yaiche

Peckham's Wrap Extraordinare of 3 years chats with Everyday Peckham about the Home Office, Muzak, and Kebabs.



EP: How long have you been in Peckham?

Salas: It's been three years now.

EP: Why did you want to set up a stall here?

Salas: Because I like it. At first, I was in a market in Tower Bridge just doing weekends. Now I work all week here. It's much better. I don't live in Peckham but I don't live far away, in Tulse Hill. The business is ok now, I'm happy here and I'm getting busier every day.

EP: What do you think is unique about Peckham?

Salas: I left Tower Bridge because the market only operates on the weekends. I really like Peckham but it's changing a lot. A lot of people are moving here. It's getting busier and busier, and lots of new places are opening up. There's lots of new restaurants; bars and coffee shops. It's getting better now whereas before it had a reputation for being a bit rough. It's getting mixed - between white and black people, it's good for the area.

EP: Do you feel your connection to the area has changed since you've been here?

Salas: No. I chose Peckham because the council could give me this great spot, which you wouldn't get in other places. The council leases it to me and I have to pay for the pitch, there's nothing for free in life! You pay them monthly or weekly.

EP: Do you have any regular customers at your stall?

Salas: Yeah, I've got too many regulars. All of them come over to me - even the bar staff. All of them here, managers, head chefs, bar workers, locals. They like my food. Look around in most streets, you have pizza, pizza, pizza, chicken - it's shit food. This is different. No one does what I do in Peckham, that's why they love it.

EP: How long have you been doing kebabs? Where did you pick up the trade?

Salas: About four years. I worked in many markets. I worked in Brixton and Tower Bridge and sometimes at Borough Market. Before the kebabs, I was a chef in restaurants. I can't remember all of them - I worked in Liverpool Street, Clapham, Hampstead. I've been in England about 18 years now - I'm originally from Algeria.

EP: Why do you choose coming to England? How different is it to Algeria?

Salas: I don't really know; it's the first place I came to. The mentality is different here – lots of nice, polite people. No one is angry, especially in Peckham. I have a lot of English friends, my wife is British. Having this stall here, I feel very much a part of Peckham. There's lots of changes though – they're moving the shops in Peckham Rye station over to the street right behind us so all the people who've got a shop in the station will move here for a bit while the entire station is being refurbished. It will be good for us.

EP: Do you come here every morning?

Salas: I get here about 8 o'clock and finish about 4 o'clock. I use Moroccan spices. I learnt the craft and the recipes from my mother. Everything I make is fresh – from the falafel and I even season the meat. I collect my ingredients from a North African butcher in Old Kent Road and I prepare it every morning. I don't buy meat from Peckham at all. It's disgusting. There's meat on the dirty floor. I can't stand the smell of fish too. The Irish butcher is the best in Peckham – I don't trust anything else.

EP: Do you have any fun stories about Peckham?

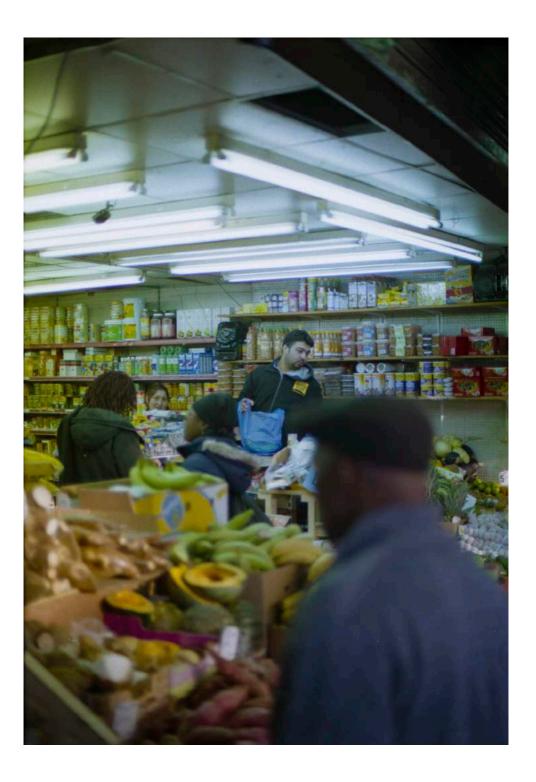
Salas: You get to see funny things everyday. One day the Home Office came to take someone away outside the butchers across the road and all of Peckham came down. The locals started shouting at them and the van so they ran away. The guy didn't get caught. You can watch it on Youtube, this happened about two years ago. I don't know what happened to him in the end though.

[On the music across the street]

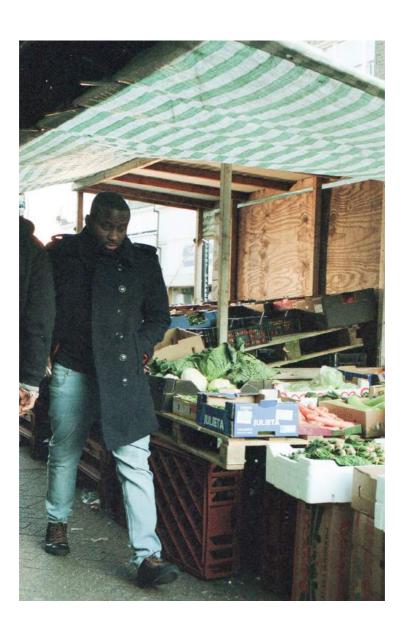
I have been listening to the same song every single day, it drives me crazy! He thinks he's in Africa or something. This is why I have my own music - I play jazz, sometimes house music.

EP: What do you see in the next 10 years in Peckham?

Salas: I don't know – I'm busy either staying alive or dead first! Who knows if I'm still alive! I like being in this street because the street's vibrant and for the business, it's busy every day. [Someone shouts and asks everyone for a lighter]. You see crazy people like this occasionally.











Qinhe Chen

Boss lady of Steamer tells

Everyday Peckham about the meaning
of community, business and life.

EP: How long have you been in Peckham?

Oinhe: I've been in Peckham since 2006. Before that I was in Fujian, China.

EP: What brings you to Peckham?

Qinhe: I just wanted to explore and be with young people. I came over alone - straight to Peckham! I had family and friends in London though so I wasn't all alone. They weren't in Peckham but I had friends and my uncle who lives in Lee.

EP: How do you find the community in Peckham?

Qinhe: Peckham has changed A LOT, in many ways. People's lifestyle changed and it's more diverse rather than just all Afro-Caribbean backgrounds, it's more mixed now. (East) Asian people are always a minority ethnicity in the UK, but now you can see more Asian people . Lots of them in Peckham are students, they come and go.

EP: How different was it from when you moved here?

Qinhe: Peckham is changing though. With Foxtons opening and then a big Costa on Rye Lane. It's a bit worrying about how that's changing the area. Peckham's very special, so when you get all the same shops you lose the uniqueness. Without that diversity and vibrancy, Peckham isn't Peckham. Things like Costa are what the council needs to curb in their regeneration, change is good but you have to know when to stop.

EP: When you first came here in 2006, how did you adapt to the environment of Peckham?

Qinhe: It's not really that integrated because there's lots of different ethnicities and Peckham often isn't seen as a whole. It takes many years of effort to integrate a community and understand how a multicultural place works. People have to learn how to communicate with each other if there's no communication, nothing happens. People in Peckham can lead different lives with lots of ethnicities in one place so there needs to be lots of communication so we're seen as a whole.

I have a lot of regulars now from different backgrounds. From regulars who buy lunch to those passing through the area for a one-off.. Having the stall here in the station is in the centre of the community, we all help each other out, like the guys on the fruit stall help me lift the shutter somedays when it won't move or watch over the stall.

EP: Why did you choose to set up your shop here?

Qinhe: I'm local, my child goes to school here so it's convenient. Just these past two years, I have learned a lot about Peckham and I can see there's potential to develop a business here. Initially, I started my business for convenience. It's a really bubbly and vibrant place - most of the places in the UK are very boring where you just work and eat and people spend money overseas for holidays.

But London has changed in the past 10 years and Peckham has become more diverse. This is very obvious in Peckham's atmosphere that you can't find anywhere else. You can't find that in Oxford Street with all the chain shops - these streets are vibrant but in a very different way. People go to Oxford Street with a task or a shopping list, it's all very formal. In Peckham, we're just having fun.



"You can't get these buns anywhere in Peckham apart from here. It's my best selling item."

EP: What do you think of the changes planned for this area of Rye Lane?

Qinhe: You have to have development in places like Peckham but it can go too far. I think development's good but you have to know when to stop. I don't agree when everyone is completely against change in Peckham, but I think you need to have a compromise. When there's too much development and everything gets expensive then it's just going to push original people out, you can see house prices are going up massively already. Peckham over the last five years has been changing rapidly with the house market prices and the chain stores - you can't let it change the local area too much that it loses its uniqueness. It's all about how it's done and who it's for - development is okay as long as it's done

for the people.

We need to recognise the value of businesses that work hard, and be more careful about illegal immigrants in Peckham. The council needs to take a step back from regeneration, because it's going to kill the people who work hard. So they need a balance between trying to keep honest, hard working local people in and restricting the number of illegal immigrants that put pressure on the these businesses.

The development around here is good, at least for me. With the international food court, it'll bring more young people into Peckham, which is good for my customer numbers and might give jobs to lots of locals. When more young people come to Peckham for a night out, its good for my stall when they pass it on the way back home at night. The new food court should be good for multiculturalism too, it's not just me there but also African jerk shops and Chinese stalls and British food all in one place - it'll really help making Peckham a whole, rather than lots of fragmented groups and ethnicities; this will help diversity.















Muhammad Shahid & Muhammad Farooq

Two brothers open up to
Everyday Peckham about changes,
challenges and why they call
Peckham home.

Shahid: My name is Muhammad Shahid, my brother Farooq and I are from Pakistan. I came here as an Accounting student about nine years ago. Our parents are still back home in Lahore.

EP: How did you get into the vegetable business?

Shahid: Before this, I was working at TK Maxx in Central London. One of my friends told me this business is profitable. That's why I tried.

EP: What difficulties have you faced in this business?

Shahid: Depends. If your business is like busy then it's fine, but business is different everyday. Sometimes its busy, sometimes difficult when it isn't. Hard to match wages and other things. Other than that it is fine.

EP: How different was it from when you moved here?

Farooq: There has been a big change. When I first came here people call it Mini Africa. Something happened in London during 2010 or 2011. Now I see more English people here. Different people. Before there were too many problems. Robbery, fighting. Sometimes it feels as if it has not changed at all.



EP: What other changes have you seen?

Shahid: The council is still planning and they have given me notice to stay till 2020. I don't really know about the process, it's the government. The station is still very busy currently, which is good. There are changes, which affects different people differently. Sometimes in good ways, sometimes in bad ways.

EP: What is Peckham's appeal to you?

Shahid: The main reason why I moved to Peckham was because it was different. Initially, I wanted to move to East London because people from my country settled there. However I thought that I should move somewhere that I could start afresh. My friend and I decided on Peckham even though he felt more comfortable in East London. Honestly, when I visited East London, I didn't really like it.

EP: How do you see Peckham in the future?

Shahid: There's problems everywhere, including Peckham. However it has changed so much over the past nine years when I was here. I feel like I am part of that change. I make decent money here, and I have a lot of friends here that I really cannot move anywhere else. The amount of time that I've spent here allowed me to understand and see who's good and who's bad, and it is a big part of my life now.













Dawn Wilson

Peckham's latest entrepreneur talks sugar cane, diversity and clean ups with Everyday Peckham.

Dawn: I've been here for about six weeks now. Before I was doing the same thing, so selling sugar cane juice, but trading at festivals and markets in and around London. I just sort of found this space by chance, it was a juice bar down this alleyway before I arrived. I was just in the area walking by and saw that the unit was to let, and the guy who actually owned it was sat inside. He saw me looking at the sign and asked if I was interested.

EP: What brings you to Peckham?

Dawn: From what I've heard from the other traders, they say that in the summer in particular it's really busy - a lot of people like to come down here because it's like off the beaten track. It still has that kind of authentic, rustic feel and it's supporting local businesses as well. I know the stall holders round here and we all seem to get along quite well. I live in Bermondsey but I've always lived in South East London. I grew up in Peckham and Nunhead, and I used to actually hate coming to Peckham, Rye Lane in particular. I used to call it the arsehole of London.

Dawn: To be fair, Rye Lane hasn't really been regenerated - I would say that it's still quite authentic Peckham. During the day at least. During the night it changes and you can see gentrification at work. Before this, a lot of the clubs down here were oriented to the locals but currently they are more geared towards a white audience. I think gentrification, I don't like the term, but change in general is both good and bad. I don't really see it as either or. It's a tricky one.

You know when certain sorts of businesses come to an area that something is happening. We've got a Foxtons and a Costa that's just opened. When I saw that, I thought it's game over for Peckham. If you go down towards Bellenden Road, that's where you'll see the obvious signs of gentrification. It's like - when you have a cold, you can feel it brewing; when you actually have the symptoms, that's when the cold's leaving you. It's happening but you don't know it's happening and people aren't aware until it's happened.

Last year, I had a stall in the Bussey Building during a festival, which was great for me as a trader - but there weren't very many local people there. When I say local people, I mean the sort of people you see out on Rye Lane every day. It's complicated though - even people who've recently moved here might say "Well I'm local, just because I'm not an ethnic minority doesn't mean I'm not local". But you get what I mean. There wasn't much diversity at that event which made it feel a bit strange and exclusive.



"I've always known about sugar cane because of where I came from, we used to go back home and just chew it, but never saw people doing the actual juice... I'm trying to be a bit of an entrepreneur with this business."

EP: Do you feel like you're a part of Peckham now?

Dawn: Definitely. This is a good opportunity because I wouldn't have been able to afford any of the shops on the high street to do what I'm doing. This is a way for me to be a part of the community and bring something to it, especially as an ethnic minority. I'm starting to get regular customers who come back week after week, and that's nice. There was all the stuff about the reputation of Peckham as being a bit dark and dangerous but I don't buy all that, I've never had any issues in all the time I've been around here living and working here.

EP: Who would you say your customer base is at the moment?

Dawn: So far it seems like it's been a mix of people. When I'm at festivals, I get a lot of white females between ages of about 21 to around 45 as my key customers. Here I've had a lot of local support from all walks of life. People have come from the gym, from yoga, from outside the area by finding me online, and people from the local community. I like having a base and being stationary in Peckham rather than moving around all the time. I can trade and not worry too much about all the elements here and it is a great feeling to be located with such a vibrant and diverse community in Peckham.

EP: So how did you get into the sugar cane business then?

Dawn: About three years ago I wanted to become vegetarian or vegan so I was doing my own online research and looking at YouTube videos. There was one particular YouTuber that I was following who put sugar cane juice in everything. I've always known about sugar cane because of where I came from, we used to go back home and just chew it, but never saw people drinking the actual juice. I got intrigued and found out that there's only one other person in London doing it. I visited him and thought, "Yes, I want to do this".



Dawn: I'm a proper local though, born in Bermondsey, lived in Peckham then Nunhead and then back to Bermondsey but I've always been in South-East London. Have I ever thought about living somewhere else? Hell yeah, I want to live on a tropical island somewhere, because of the weather and the lifestyle. My ideal ifestyle and dream would be doing my sugar cane juices and my smoothies from some little hut on a beach somewhere, just chilling running around on the beach.

EP: Where do you get your sugar cane from?

Dawn: I get it from Jamaica, straight from the source. I have someone who imports it for me so it's cut, put on a plane and brought here. There's only one other major business using sugar cane like me and their in drinks that are available in Waitrose so it's pretty niche! [Looking at the shop name] - I have a name but people just keep letting me down, someone was meant to do it for me but then it just flopped. My brand name is 'The Cane Press'. The graffiti says 'Smack' above the shop at the moment so maybe I'm called 'Smack Juices' at the moment!

EP: What are your thoughts on the future of Peckham?

Dawn: Gentrification will happen but the change will be slow. It's happening behind the scenes, not so much on the high street yet. Let's be real, it could do with a bit of a cleaning up. I rode through here the other night and it's just a mess! I don't have a problem with them cleaning up an area and making it look more presentable. What I think the problem is is when rates go up and then locals can't afford to invest in their own area and shop and live in their own street. Just because it's Peckham, it doesn't have to be a shithole. Peckham can be for local people and diverse but also clean and look good. In one word, Peckham's diverse.







Elaine Carrigan

Peckham's mainstayer of 53 years tells Everyday Peckham about life on the lane.

Elaine: I've lived in Peckham since I was three. I'm 56. I went away for 10 years when I was about 18. I didn't want to work for anybody, so I started my own little business doing trading. In the beginning, I was selling plus-size womenswear because there was a market for that. That was probably around 33 years ago.

EP: Was your stall always in the same place?

Elaine: The same place, yes! I was at Lordship Lane for a bit, until a family member had a pitch here selling flowers. This became available and I stepped in. In the beginning I was selling womenswear and then I saw a market for gift cards. Clinton's was here before and they're quite expensive. So I stepped into that - now we're going along with the changes in the market.

EP: How do you supply your store, then and now?

Elaine: My grandfather had a market stall in East Lane Street. All of my family has been involved in trading for a few years. One of my aunts recommended me to sell these skirts and provided me with a few of them. She took me over to the East End and introduced me to the wholesaler - and it went from there. I'd go and sell ten, and run back and get another ten of them.

EP: What changes have you seen?

Elaine: When I was a child, all the lovely big stores were here. Marks & Spencers was one of them. Then it went into a different period - we had lots of new people in together with lots of different products coming into Peckham. That was nice. I got to know lots of different people over the years and I've seen their children's children grow up and they come to still chat and talk to us. Lots of people come and go don't they?

EP: It's London after all.

Elaine: Yeah, and it's quite nice. You've got that community where the old people come along and they like to stay and have a little chat for five minutes. It just gives them something to brighten their day. It's quite nice just to be able to say "Hi, how's the weather? How you doing? How you feeling today?"

EP: How do you see Peckham growing and changing in the next decade or so?

Elaine: Well, I'd like to see the diversity kept, but I'm afraid where their building all these new blocks of flats - it's not going to be social housing. So, I think the people who are being moved out can't afford to stay in the area. When they move, no one's going to patronise my stall and I'll be gone. It's changing now. I just feel it. I'm not sure because all the shops seem as though their closing and I don't know. It's losing it's vibrance. Big Time. Your generation don't buy cards as much as the older generation. It's a dying trade. So I'd have to start thinking about doing something else, changing the stall again, moving with the times, maybe a coffee store. (Laughs) That's just a joke. I keep saying that to everybody - turn my stall into a coffee store.



Elaine: The new stalls are fantastic. That's all good. I just feel that the new people who are coming in don't spend. They don't spend any money in places where they don't take the time to stroll or wander into. And everybody who visits in Frank's Bar, they don't even pass my shop nor even glance at us. It's weird. For example, it's the weekend, let's just go for a drink. I can understand that - but whenever I go anywhere I'm curious. I always think, "oh whats that, whats this?" But this generation, those people coming into Peckham they're not bringing anything for us.

I don't mind the people coming in, setting up the new shops and contributing to the diversity. But if they're completely going to take over... Peckham's going to lose its heart. And I do love Peckham.

EP: How would you describe the vibe of Peckham then?

Elaine: The people. That is Peckham. And if we lose a certain amount of people and they get replaced by the same kind of people, then I think that it will die. It will die, it won't be the same. It would be like Lordship Lane and I just feel like that's plastic.

The council says one thing and does the other when it comes to the regeneration of Peckham. The guy opposite me has been in the same stall for 25 years. The new gym opposite forced him to do that. Isn't it shocking? They just moved here in December and just because they claim he's blocking the door, he has to move. It's the space they want. And they've won. They offered him money to move in the beginning and that's where the council went against him because they said because he was offered money to move. Then he fought them. He lost. Such a shame.



EP: I think we'll be safe for the next ten years at least.

Elaine: You reckon ten years? Once that station develops then they'll start developing this area. They had planning permission to make these flats, but I don't know why Mike Ashley stopped it. He owns this building [Gestures to a building opposite] I thought the bigger picture was to make the flats here with an entrance on the high street and a small gym, but now he's got that entrance on the other side of the building. When we had a petition going, the security guys were told not to sign it. Mike Ashley's a wicked man. You can only have so much money can't you? You can't take it with you when you're gone.

EP: Do you think this infill here will disappear too?

Elaine: That's part of the development plan isn't it? To replace the Peckhamplex with flats, and the multi storey carpark too. Whether Peckhamplex will move - obviously the council will have to give them somewhere elsebut whether they move them down. It was always the talk. You know the builder's yard down Peckham Hill Street? It was always the talk that they were going to build something there for them years ago. Again... flats. [sighs] More people. But just busy and not using Peckham. The people who are moving in, they're moving in for the commute up to town, and I don't know...they just won't use Peckham as how Peckham should be used.











Corinne Turner & Eileen Conn

Leaders of Peckham Vision tell Everyday Peckham about what they do.

EP: What is Peckham Vision?

Eileen: Peckham Vision are a group of local people who value the diversity and vibrancy of Peckham, working together to help ourselves and others engage with shaping the future of Peckham town centre, making it a better place for us all to live and work in. We're local people that work together trying to make a difference in Peckham, both traders and community members working together. We started in 2005 but nobody ever mentions what local people have done in Peckham or the impact they've had on the planning process here - our work is very rarely mentioned when all the big publicity comes to Peckham - it's really painful.

EP: Tell us more about what is it you do?

Eileen: Peckham Vision works to raise awareness of people who live or work locally about important changes, issues and impacts on the area and the community. Crucially, we develop opportunities for the community to influence changes and try and actualise the potential of Peckham. We help the community to understand and engage with the complex processes of planning, opportunities for improvements and other town centre matters.

Corrine: So we enable the knowledge and experience of the local community to inform local public agency decision-making, informing the local community of the results of successful campaigning and of the lessons learnt. Amongst all of this, we're creating opportunities for people to make connections locally - you need people working together in the community to influence decisions.

EP: Why set up Peckham Vision?

Eileen: We want to create an improvement environment where communities thrive, ensuring Peckham remains the diverse and inclusive place it is, protecting its identity and developing its potential. To do this we have to hold the council to account and improve the quality and integrity of their decisions, through informed citizen participation. Connecting all of this, we want to improve the way authorities relate to the local community in Peckham.

EP: How does it operate then?

Elaine: We use our network to inform thousands of local people of the developments affecting the Peckham town centre neighbourhood, and work to support local people taking part in decisions by providing an information hub and drop-in for discussion at Peckham Vision's shop in Rye Lane - we're the community information hub in Peckham, informing people so they can then take action. We also have a mobile exhibition, used at community events and public meetings, which lets us connect to large numbers of local people with our work. In our Peckham Vision studio and shop we can test out ideas, engage with the community and deliver seminars, workshops and discussions.



EP: Where do you hold your functions and events?

Eileen: Our main focus is on Peckham Town Centre, the people who use it, run their businesses in it, or those who live in local neighbourhoods. We've got a studio in the Bussey Building and a shop in the Holdron's Arcade, on Rye Lane for anyone who wants to drop-in and connect with the local community or discuss any Peckham issues. Our shop also sells local Peckham goods alongside our campaign material. We've also got an extensive online presence through our website and are active on social media, with frequent updates.

EP: Do you have any further information on how to get involved?

Corrine: Come and visit us in the shop to find out more - there are plenty of opportunities to get involved! The shop's open on Tuesdays 2-4pm and Saturdays 2-5pm: Holdron's Arcade, 135a Rye Lane, SE15 4ST. You can also email us (info@peckhamvision.org) for general information and about volunteering opportunities. For information on our current campaigns and consultations have a look at our website (http://www.peckhamvision.org) or give us a follow on Twitter (http://twitter.com/PeckhamVision).

