

The Winston Churchill
Memorial Trust of Australia

resident
participation in
neighbourhood
renewal of public
housing

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Signed by Julie Blake 14 January 2018

“This is our community.
It’s up to us to decide what
kind of future we want”

Fergus Finlay, Chief Executive Barnardos
Chair Joint Redevelopment Board (Fatima regeneration Dublin) ¹

¹ <http://www.cdysb.ie/Files/YNOW/YNow-Issue-07-Winter-2009.aspx>

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Clarifying terminology

The terminology used in relation to regeneration and community engagement can be interchangeable and poorly defined. Various government policies, strategies and regulatory frameworks use the same language for different meanings. Community members may interpret community engagement as empowerment and the plethora of different professionals involved in regeneration projects (planners, architects, health and community workers, and housing professionals) all place their own meanings on the term.

For the purposes of this report I have kept it simple and used a few key definitions.

Community or neighbourhood

I have used the term Community and Neighbourhood to describe a group of people living in the same area. Generally, where I have used the term neighbourhood it is referring to a smaller geographic area.

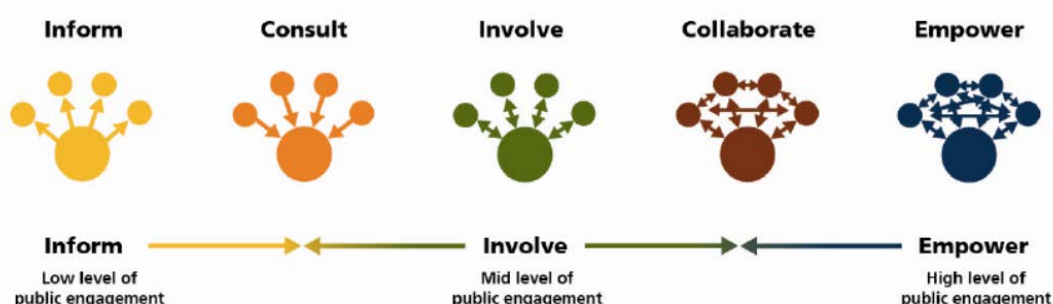
Community engagement

The Scottish Standards for Community Engagement¹ describes community engagement quite usefully as developing and sustaining a working relationship between one or more public bodies and one or more community group, to help them both to understand and act on the needs or issues that the community experiences.

I have considered community engagement to be both a process and an outcome in its own right.

Community engagement – what does it include?

The IAP² Spectrum developed by The International Association for Public Participation contains five elements and I have used the term community engagement when mentioning any of these elements.



Resident participation

I have used this term interchangeably with resident engagement and customer engagement when I am referring to an engagement process involving customers of social housing rather than the broader community. Occasionally I have used the term to include people living in an area in all tenures; social, private rental and owned housing.

¹ Communities Scotland (2005) *National Standards for Community Engagement*. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive

Different approaches to resident participation

There are two broad approaches to resident participation in regeneration projects according to Wood.²

1. A Managerial or pragmatic approach based on the assumption that there will be benefits of involving local people such as the efficiency savings that might be derived from their inclusion, and
2. A Citizenship approach based on the belief that residents have a right to influence the decisions that affect them.

Regeneration and renewal - definition

I have used the terms regeneration and renewal interchangeably in this report.

Regeneration is taken to mean projects that include demolition and rebuilding of social housing (or housing estates) and other strategies to aim to reverse the physical, economic, and social decline of places where market forces alone won't suffice.

The level of investment in the "other strategies" varies from project to project depending on the policy

Regeneration - background

The term regeneration started to be used after the Second World War when the emphasis was to clear city slums and provide a sense of community for lower socio-economic groups.

In the countries I visited, England, Scotland and Ireland social housing (or council estates) increasingly experienced a number of issues from the late 1970's. These issues included mass unemployment, increasing levels of poverty and need, low demand for properties in some "problem" estates, poor housing management, sub-standard housing quality, rising crime and a high number of vacant properties.³

Wholesale demolition and rebuilding occurred in the early 1990's with a focus on the physical regeneration of the housing. By the end of the 1990s, a broad consensus was developing across the UK that past regeneration policies had failed to achieve any lasting impact for local people.⁴

Both the timing of the adoption of a new approach, and the level of commitment to resident engagement varied across England, Scotland and Wales. However, each jurisdiction adopted a model of area based multi-agency and multi-sector partnership to provide a more holistic approach to neighbourhood regeneration in the past. A key feature often was the involvement of the community in the governance and delivery of the initiative.

The level of funding to support this broader approach has varied significantly under various programmes and regulatory frameworks and this is still the case.

² Wood, M. (2002) *Resident participation in urban and community renewal*, AHURI Final Report No. 23, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, UNSW/UWS Research Centre. Available at <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/23>

³ Power, A., and Mumford, K. (1999) *The slow death of great cities? Urban abandonment or urban renaissance*. (York: York Publishing Services).

⁴ Imrie, R., and Waco, M. (Eds) (2003) *Urban Renaissance? New Labour, community and urban policy*. (Bristol: Policy Press).

Introduction

We live in a world of inequality where deindustrialisation and the globalisation of labour has hit some cities, and some pockets within those cities hard.

Introduction

My Fellowship trip predominantly focussed on communities deeply affected by these structural changes. I visited Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dublin and London and listened to people experienced in large-scale social housing regeneration projects. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to walk around social housing estates and areas undergoing change through regeneration, both past and present.

I was inspired by the passion of people committed to making real changes to people's lives.

Winston Churchill Memorial Trust of Australia

This report has been prepared for my Churchill Fellowship following my return from this unique opportunity to see in practice how people in other countries are approaching resident engagement in social housing renewal.⁵

Structure of the report

The format of the report follows the direction of my trip and is arranged in the order I visited each city. The report captures some of the history and context of the housing estates and agencies I visited. The content is drawn from the conversations I had, research and documents I was directed to by the people I met, and from my background research before and after the trip to help contextualise what I learnt.

I have captured my thoughts in Reflection Points at the end of each section in the report, with key learnings summarised in the Executive Summary and explored in more detail in the Conclusion at the end of the report.

Sharing the learnings

This report has been written to share my learnings from my visit and the resources I discovered along the way which are clearly referenced to assist the reader locate documents in the field. This approach has made the report long but hopefully useful.

Over the next 12 months I will run workshops for the social housing sector nationally through the professional association the Australasian Housing Institute.

⁵ Churchill Fellowship information is available at <https://www.churchilltrust.com.au/application-process/how-to-apply/5>

Executive Summary

To effect successful change for people living in social housing we need to approach it with our head and our heart. We need structures, strategy and resources to work alongside our values, commitment and beliefs.

Similarities and differences

Since my return from my Churchill Fellowship trip to the Ireland, Scotland and the UK I have reflected on both the similarities and the differences with Australian practice.

Social housing as land value

One overwhelming similarity is the changing political and cultural landscape that increasingly looks at ageing housing estates through the lens of the land value rather than its value as a home and a community.

Increasing commitment to listening to customers

Reassuringly though, in most areas that I visited I observed an increasing commitment to listening to social housing customers at the individual and neighbourhood level. This is through conversations “on the doorstep” and “walking around”, surveys, and other feedback layered with operational and community data to identify where to focus energy and resources.

Regulatory frameworks and good practice guides

Both Scotland and Ireland have regulatory frameworks and implementation tools to mandate and support good practice in resident engagement. In 2018 the Lord Mayor of London introduced “mandated” requirements for resident engagement in social housing regeneration projects in London including the right to say no to a project via a ballot. This is not the case in Australia where there is a light touch approach to resident engagement like the rest of the UK.

Getting out and about

Largely due to our “salt and pepper” approach to social housing in Australia our practice has always involved being out and about in our neighbourhoods, but this is a new practice being implemented in the three countries I visited. Taking a holistic neighbourhood approach to more than just housing, being located in the community and regularly talking to customers where they live is becoming increasingly popular, particularly with the introduction of Universal Credit.⁶

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit>

Having fun

Creating a menu of events that are held where people live and congregate and are experiential and fun helps to reach people with limited English literacy barriers, people that are socially isolated and don't get out much, and people who are struggling with a chaotic lifestyle and all that entails.

Before and after the regeneration project

People live their lives before, during and after a regeneration project. Whilst this sounds obvious project managers think projects and Australian housing practitioners should consider the before and after. They should plan how to sustain the engagement strategies and other programs introduced during a regeneration project by building in sustainability measures before the project starts.

Unleashing the potential of customers to effect change

There is a stronger culture of active citizenship in Ireland and Scotland and a growing understanding amongst housing professionals in the UK that there is a role for social housing providers to support community activism amongst its communities because doing so can harness the untapped assets and passion amongst residents that can effect positive change and divert resources into disadvantaged communities. A largely consumerist and narrow approach to engagement has been adopted in Australia and I believe there is much to gain from taking a broader approach and building capacity for civic participation.

Conclusion

The sheer scale of social housing regeneration projects is staggering, and this scale encourages the development of knowledge, skills amongst customer engagement specialists and project team members more broadly in Scotland, Ireland and the UK

The impetus for demolishing social housing is strong and replacing it with "mixed-tenure" sites that increase the number of people who are working and can afford to purchase a home living in refurbished social housing estates. A new building and a new neighbour does not equate to an overnight transition to economic and social wealth.

Regeneration projects in Australia should be looking at regeneration as an opportunity for social and economic change as well as new buildings. To achieve real change, it is important that resources are put into engagement with residents to understand what they want for their new home and community and to use the opportunity to build capacity and a share in the wealth with training and employment opportunities.

This takes resources and it takes time and this needs to be acknowledged and quantified when the goals and budgets of regeneration projects are being set.

Programme of Meetings

The table below contains a list of the people who generously shared their extensive knowledge, experience and valuable time with me. They were clever people and I was lucky to spend time with them.

Their passion and enthusiasm for changing lives was inspiring, and I extend my heartfelt thanks to each person for their generosity. I am particularly grateful to Jerry Byrne, Sean Maloney, and Michael O'Neill who came out of retirement to share their stories with me, and Joe Donohue for volunteering his time. Thank you!

Location	Organisation	People and their role
Glasgow	Wheatley Group	Jackie McIntosh – Director of Property Development and Initiatives
	Wheatley Group	Elizabeth Cuthbertson – Research Insight and Strategy
	Wheatley Group	Angela Terry – Director of Learning and Innovation
	Wheatley Group	Graham Thomas – Regeneration Officer
	Wheatley Group	Helen Douglas – Project Officer Transformational Regeneration Areas
	Wheatley Group	Ian Davie – Property Development and Initiatives Manager
	Wheatley Group	Thomas Graham
Glasgow	Glasgow City Council	Helen Douglas – Project Officer (Transformational Regeneration Areas)
		Chair Glasgow Access Panel
		Zeba Aziz – Planning Officer
Glasgow	Community Renewal	Paul MColgan – Chief Executive
Glasgow	Community Renewal	John Mennie – Service Manager
Edinburgh	Edinburgh City Council	Michelle Fraser – Senior Project Manager
	Edinburgh City Council	George Norval – Housing Operations Manager
	Edinburgh City Council	Libby Strong – Housing Operations Manager
Dublin	Dublin City Council	Darach O'Connor – Senior Executive Officer
	Dublin City Council	Jerry Byrne – Retired Project Manager
	Dublin City Council	Sean Maloney – Retired Manager Housing & Construction

	Dublin City Council	Michael O'Neill – Retired Principal Officer Project Management
	Dublin City Council	James Bradley – Staff Officer
	Dublin City Council	Dr. Daithi Downey – Head of Research
	Dublin City Council	Mary Harvey – Project Manager
	Fatima Groups United Resource Centre	Joe Donohue – Project Manager
London	Metropolitan Thames Valley	Simon Theobald – Head of Customer Engagement Michele Naclerio – Scrutiny and Involvement Co-ordinator Kelly Thomas – Neighbourhood Investment Lead
London	National Housing Federation	Nick Yandle – Policy Officer James Prestwich – Head of Policy
London	Places for People	James Zamchick – Sales and Commercial Director Mary Parsons – Group Director, Placemaking & Regeneration Nick Watson – New Business & Bid Director

Glasgow – Scotland

Glasgow's social housing past

Industrialisation attracted many hundreds of thousands of people to Glasgow which resulted in severe health issues associated with overcrowded tenements with no running water or inside bathrooms.

As a solution, the city embraced tower blocks for social housing like no other in Europe. Mass council housing estates were hastily built, and tens of thousands of people were moved. At that time 60% of housing in Glasgow was social housing.

In the late 1970's and 1980's "problematic" estates started to be demolished and people moved again. By the early 2000's the council had high levels of housing debt £900 million and a quarter of its 84,000 homes deemed unfit to live in, and half in significant disrepair.

De-industrialisation

Glasgow has been hit hard by de-industrialisation and globalisation with 90% of manufacturing leaving the city resulting in entrenched and persistent problems with unemployment, poor health and economic and social deprivation.

Whilst the city has reinvented itself in many ways, it is still a city that is struggling with a legacy of industrial decline, unemployment, poverty and urban decay. Glasgow has 56 of the 100 most deprived areas in Scotland.

Social housing transferred to a housing association

To kickstart regeneration projects in the 2000's, the Glasgow City Council transferred 81,000 social housing homes to housing associations and Glasgow Housing Association (now Wheatley Group) retained 40,000 of those homes.

There are eight Transformational Regeneration Areas⁷ in Glasgow and Sighthill is the largest.

Sighthill Regeneration

Built in the 1960's Sighthill consisted of 10 x 20-storey tower blocks and some smaller blocks, once home to 7,500 people. It was built next to the largest chemical factory in the world until it closed in 1969.



⁷ <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=19842>

Community empowerment – decision making

Local residents are engaged at the highest level with governance by a Board and underneath a local Sighthill Delivery Group each containing residents and other community members from the estate.

Sighthill regeneration project and Masterplan

It is a 50-hectare site with 826 new homes, 3 new schools, two bridges, a green network and a revitalised park. A summary of the project to date is on the video below <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U50pxlb2NSE>



Policy and Regulatory framework

The Sighthill regeneration project operates within a regulatory framework that requires social landlords to consult tenants on proposals that affect them, and take account of their views, and ensure that tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence decisions.⁸

This is not the case in England or Australia where there is a light touch approach to regulation in relation to tenant consultation and engagement.

⁸ The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010, the Scottish Social Housing Charter and Regulator. Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and Scottish Human Rights Commission.

The ballot

The first significant opportunity for engagement for the residents in Sighthill was regarding the potential transfer of their homes to a community organisation three years before the Masterplan was developed.

In April 2002 the tenants of the Glasgow City Council were asked to vote if they would like their homes transferred to the Glasgow Housing Association which was created for this purpose. Sighthill residents were part of this ballot.

Tenants were promised new housing to replace obsolete and substandard housing that would be demolished or upgraded, and central to the transfer was the future opportunity for community ownership of their home. The transfers contained an explicit commitment to housing improvements as an urgent priority and community empowerment as a goal.

A key motivator and goal for the transfer was a promise from the UK Treasury to write off a £900 million debt owed by the Glasgow City Council.

The residents voted 58% in favour, and in 2003 the Sighthill site was part of a transfer of 81,000 social housing homes to Glasgow Housing Association. It was part of a UK and Scottish trend to transfer homes from councils which have the equivalent role as the state owned public housing in Australia.

Tenants were then given the opportunity to control the decision making of the management of their home through management of small community managed organisations via a lease with the Glasgow Housing Association (now Wheatley Group). Approximately 60 small-scale and community managed organisations were formed for this purpose.

The ballot committed to a second stage transfer of ownership of homes to tenant-led organisations to give tenants a real choice of localised, neighbourhood-based community ownership but this has only partially occurred.⁹

Many of the policy aims of the transfer have been met including the commencement of regeneration projects such as Sighthill to build new homes and facilities.

However, the fact that the policy aims of council debt reduction vs community empowerment has been problematic and resulted in a lack detail underpinning the transfer agreement. There is now a financial disincentive for the Glasgow Housing Association (Wheatley Group) to transfer homes to tenant-led organisations.

The ballot process across Scotland and the UK has been a useful way to build strong capacities in engaging tenants and communities. It can give tenants a voice about their priorities to shape plans; and gives the new organisation understanding of and credibility within the community.

Reflection point 1

- 1.1 Tenant ballots can be a useful mechanism for engaging tenants in major changes to the management of their home such as a transfer of ownership of their home
- 1.2 Conflicting policy aims may result in some outcomes being compromised without specific measurable contract mechanisms to deliver on each goal

⁹ Kearns A., and Lawson L., 2008, 'Housing Stock Transfer in Glasgow – The First Five years: A Study of Policy Implementation', *Housing Studies*, Volume 23, No. 6, pgs. 857-878.

Procurement Contracts to share the opportunities

It is widely accepted that large regeneration projects create jobs, but the benefits from increased economic activity in an area is not shared equally and does not “trickle down” to people living in the estates being redeveloped.

The Sighthill regeneration project has used its significant purchasing power with contractors to facilitate the increase in economic activity and employment to be shared with residents in the area.

Morgan Sindall have a £36.5 million contract for civil works such as roads and landscaping and their contract contains key performance indicators (KPI's) to create employment and training opportunities and to engage with local schools, college and university to support the local community.

They have developed several training and community engagement initiatives to meet their KPI's including the following;

On-site training facility for construction training (TIGERS)	Work placement for trainees on the site	Big Day Out event BBQ, football, other activities
Grammar school pupils' visits to the project office	12-week work placements for local students	Theatre company visits to schools
Gardening equipment available to tenants	Information regularly updated on website	Lunchtime discussions with university students

TIGERS – Training Initiatives Generating Effective Results for Scotland



This programme is of interest as it includes local young men in the activities of the construction project, as active rather than passive participants in the redevelopment process.

On-site training facility

An on-site training facility has been established at Sighthill to introduce local young people to the construction industry and learn construction-related skills. This includes paving, kerbs, concrete, first aid, and asbestos awareness. Two groups will be trained during the project.

Participants will be a part of a live construction environment and gain experience on-site to gain skills and confidence to equip them for the future. Trainees have a unique opportunity to participate in normal site activities such as tool box talks and to interact with other construction workers at lunch-time in the on-site canteen.

Work placement

Importantly there is a work placement element with an aim that an offer of employment will follow a successful placement.

Reflection point 2

- 2.1 Incorporating “soft” regeneration project outcomes such as training, employment, and community engagement into procurement contracts can assist in providing opportunities for the local community to actively participate in projects, and benefit from the increased economic activity.

Social change through Art

Involving communities in regeneration is not a simple task and there are a range of barriers that might prevent local people from getting involved.

At Sighthill negative experiences of past failed renewal projects and poor housing management practices, low educational attainment, and social exclusion has been a barrier to the desire or capacity to participate.

The stigma of living on a housing estate that is in serious decline can exacerbate social exclusion. This reinforces low self-opinions and feelings of inferiority and powerlessness, reinforcing social exclusion and decreasing the likelihood of participating.

It is increasingly understood that to overcome these barriers and ensure that participation is widespread considerable time and resources are needed to allow participants to develop skills and gain the confidence that they require to participate in renewal initiatives.¹⁰

A community development approach has been adopted at Sighthill with a focus on community-based activity and projects. This has been identified as one of the best ways to achieve positive outcomes in regeneration projects¹¹

Why art projects? They have been identified as being able to support personal development, help with confidence, skills and motivation. Making friends helps people feel more positive about where they live and feel better and healthier because of their involvement.¹²

Exploring whether art can help

New Rhythms were contracted to explore whether there was an appetite in the community for art, and they did this through a pantomime.



The engagement was a success and a Sighthill Arts Strategy programme commenced.

This clip shows a school holiday programme facilitated by New Rhythms.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILldX1cBP_4

¹⁰ Wood M. (2002)

¹¹ Duncan, P., and S. Thomas (2001) *Neighbourhood Management – A Good Practice Guide*. (Croydon: Genesis Print and marketing for CIH and Housing Corporation, pg. 29.

¹² Kay, A. (2000) 'Art and community development: the role the arts have in regenerating communities'. *Community Development Journal*. 35, pp 414-424.

Pidgin Perfect

A consultancy company, Pidgin Perfect, was commissioned to work with residents to build capacity to contribute to the design brief to create an outdoor community space, to enable further engagement and learning from the project.

A consultation process was designed through making and doing rather than more traditional methods. Support was given to develop ideas which resulted in participants managing their own large- scale prototype of the proposed space. This informal style of engagement does not require a minimum standard of literacy and Pidgin Perfect engaged with people across a broad range of ages (6 to 60 years of age).



Events such as go-sees, visioning activities, gardening and craft classes, community suppers and live building were used.

Reflection point 3

- 3.1 Informal engagement strategies such as art projects can reach a range of age groups and include people with low levels of literacy in decision making and visioning.

Measuring outcomes at Sighthill

Stage 1 of the project has been completed and GoWell¹³ are contracted to examining the experiences of households living through the process of regeneration and has published a first report.

The findings from Stage 1 are positive in relation to the new build housing which has identified benefits of pride, personal progress and security. Related to the improved quality of the homes, residents reported improved social relations either due to family members sleeping over, or inviting friends to visit, eating family meals around a dining table and coping with health conditions better.

In this report both estates reported the loss of local amenities, especially social venues such as cafes, local shops, play areas, and in the case of Sighthill also shops, a library, the bus service, and post office. Some of these services were because of the regeneration project and residents were hopeful the regeneration process would replace some of what was missing in the area.

“One day you went out and there’s a sign at the bus stops ‘Bus will no longer stop at this address’. Uh huh, we would have liked a wee bit more information, aye... The number ten bus, they weren’t getting enough people coming on them. I used to catch that bus every day.’ (SH6)¹⁴ pg. 69.

The report found that knowledge of what was planned seemed greater in Sighthill than Pollokshaws. The Sighthill project has a significantly larger budget and they suggest that this is likely to be the reason for the difference in knowledge.



¹³Lawson, L. and Kearns A. (2017) 'Living in new homes in Glasgow's regeneration areas: the experience of residents in the Pollokshaws and Sighthill Transformational Regeneration Areas', GoWell, Glasgow.

¹⁴ Lawson, L (2017), pg. 69.

Stalled Spaces (A wee space...for a wee while)

In Glasgow 40% of the city's residents lives within 500m of a derelict site. Studies indicate a correlation between 'areas of deprivation' and location of vacant and derelict land.

Stalled Spaces is a placemaking project started in 2010 by the Glasgow City Council and supported by Wheatley Group. The project won the 2013 City to City Barcelona (Fostering Arts and Design) Award.



In 2008 the Glasgow City Council recognised that the economic downturn was delaying developments and they resolved to work with site and property owners to temporarily landscape vacant sites to create simple, but well maintained grassed areas open to the public.

This led to the development of the Stalled Spaces Programme which is a place-making initiative to support community-led improvement of stalled or under-used open spaces.

Vacant, derelict or neglected spaces for short term projects can inject life into an underused area and provide long term benefits for the community.

Citizens can reclaim unproductive land that is being under used to create vibrant, attractive spaces that can give communities a sense of ownership and pride. Spaces are for creative people-centred purposes.

Managed by planning this place-based approach focusses resources on identified areas. Between 2010 and 2013 13ha of land was transformed.

Glasgow City Council has seen a reduction in anti-social behaviour, an increase in activity and the attraction of business investment into an otherwise less attractive area.

Only community-led groups with a constitution can apply and the Council will help with the application including writing a constitution.

Glasgow City Council's Population and Health report found the following positive benefits for participants in Stalled Spaces:

83% of projects promoted integration in the neighbourhood

74% of participants reported they became more physically active

75% socialised with neighbours

78% gained new skills

The programme has now been rolled out in seven local council areas across Scotland through the Legacy 2014 program to provide lasting benefit following the Commonwealth Games.

Reflection point 4

- 4.1 Community-led Placemaking projects can transform areas of neglect, particularly whilst areas are waiting for regeneration and can reduce social isolation and can re-kindle pride in an area.

Edinburgh

Community Renewal

I talked to Community Renewal at their head office in Glasgow, but the focus of the conversation was on their work in Edinburgh at Muirhouse in particular.

Muirhouse ranks overall as the 6th most deprived area in Scotland.

Community Renewal talked about the importance of social interactions and cited recent research that identified loneliness and social isolation as harmful to our health. This research shows that lacking social connections is as damaging to our health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day¹⁵.

The report identified risk factors to social isolation

Loss of mobility, lower income

Lack of public transport, physical environment i.e. no toilets or benches

Housing

Fear of crime

High population turnover

These are all factors present in neglected social housing estates

Muirhouse – Our Place

Community Renewal start with the question, what would it take to lift a neighbourhood out of poverty? Their approach to transforming communities is holistic and is about empowering people living in the neighbourhood to get involved in community activity. They engage with every household in the community. The model they use from their website is below.¹⁶



¹⁵ <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/threat-to-health/>

¹⁶ <http://www.communityrenewal.org.uk/>

Listening surveys

Community Renewal have several offices around Scotland and have been based in Muirhouse in Edinburgh for 7 years. They run programmes including an Employability Service, youth and young offender programme, training and capacity building, health case management, and community development work focussed through a listening survey approach.

Community work in Muirhouse

Muirhouse was a large estate with 100% council housing and 13,000 people 15 years ago. Some stages of the large regeneration project have been completed with more homes, a shopping centre, civic square, school and commercial space still to be delivered.

Community Renewal base their offices in an accessible spot in the area that they are working in and they approach their work by putting the person in charge. In Muirhouse they are in the shopping centre. They invite members of the community to come in by welcoming them to drop in for a chat and a cup of tea. They embed themselves into the community and work in a sustained way for the long term.

Observations on the Muirhouse consultations

As Community Renewal are based in Muirhouse they participated in some of the formal community consultation sessions for the redevelopment and they observed that often in these meetings it was the same people who spoke. Other engagement processes that had been used by the project team included online surveys and standing in the shopping centre to talk to people.

Listening to people who want to work

With their approach to employment services they started with a premise to speak to people who wanted to work in an area. They wanted to see what would happen to the area so they door knocked. 83% of the people accessing their employment service and people find them through word of mouth.

Access to employment in Edinburgh is good with around 2% unemployment but some areas have up to 50% unemployment. Community Renewal suggested that if you help people out of poverty the community will accept you and approve of your regeneration project.

Measuring

It is important to measure progress and they do this by looking at income which is available at the household level and this can be mapped – green to red. Who is in poverty in the area?

Layered on top can be; what are people being warned about? families or households, GPs, social workers, police, and schools. This information builds a picture.

Data from door knocking. What are people telling them? These three elements combine to build an effective picture of the community

Place-making/local conversations

Community Renewal are working on place-based community development initiatives that facilitate people-led outcomes. This is community engagement at the empowerment end of the spectrum. One of these is a Big Lottery programme facilitating the creation of community vision statements to outline what they want and enacting them with the community. The programme is called Our Place¹⁷.

The aims are to empower local people and organisations to bring about a massive and lasting positive difference to their neighbourhood.

Another programme they are working with is Local Conversations, the People's Health Trust which is about listening to what people in the community want and facilitating the community to determine how and when the money is best spent¹⁸.

The approach is flexible and longer-term and facilitates progress at the pace that works for each community. It is a strengths-based model and looks at the assets that exist in a neighbourhood. It brings together local talent and energy, connects community members and increases the confidence to take positive action.

Reflection point 5

- 5.1 Genuinely listening to the community and supporting people to identify what they want to achieve can effect lasting positive change
- 5.2 Going out into the community and being situated where people go such as the local shops is important to engage with a wide range of people
- 5.3 People are best placed to know what they want and need. Rather than being prescriptive giving control over spending can be powerful

¹⁷ <https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/our-place>

¹⁸ <https://www.peopleshealthtrust.org.uk/local-conversations>

Edinburgh – Muirhouse regeneration project

Regeneration projects in Edinburgh face a lot of pressure points.

There is a shortage of affordable housing in Edinburgh and the population is predicted to grow by 30% over the next 20 years. Scotland has approximately 600,000 social housing dwellings which is around 23% of all houses in Scotland, this compares to 17% for England.

According to the 2016 statistical compendium publication on social tenants in Scotland, the standard of the social housing homes is an issue that needs addressing with 38% failing the Scottish Housing Quality Standard¹⁹

The City of Edinburgh Council gave me a site tour of Muirhouse and Leith Fort and I was shown around the new mixed tenure housing that has been built in these locations.

Muirhouse regeneration overview. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ApPnJbLHuNk>



¹⁹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/social-tenants-scotland-2016/>

Measuring Outcomes

The Edinburgh City Council identified some of the challenges with measuring outcomes for regeneration projects in terms of improvements to health and reductions in poverty levels when people move out of an area. There has been a strong push for an increased social mix and this can confuse the data post renewal.

Muirhouse and Pennywell are down 5% post renewal in relation to deprivation but is this is probably an indicator of the new people moving into the area. There is a question as to whether anything has been improved for the existing community and it was suggested this evaluation be addressed at the start of the project.

Health indicators can also be problematic in terms of identifying the need for health services. Older people need health services, but this might not be identified on the ground.

The key community engagement tools used in the Muirhouse regeneration include:

Community engagement capacity building

Using the local housing team because people already know them

Pitching up at local events and taking a stall

Going to the local shops

Keeping councillors briefed to keep support for the project

Community walkabouts to give opportunities for people to speak outside formal meetings as some people don't like conflict and won't speak when the "usual suspects" do

Rolling engagements as the project evolves

Talking to people, tenants in other blocks

Reframing the relationship in Craigroyston

The new Craigroyston Community High School in Muirhouse



The Edinburgh Council are approaching issues around the new high school alongside the regeneration project by engaging with the community; the people who live and work there.

Rather than focussing solely on the regeneration area and a “just having a roof over your head” approach they are thinking about the broader area as somewhere from which to build all your life.

“

“Working in the way we have done with the Total Craigroyston initiative feels like we have actually been listened to. It feels different this time”

Local Resident at Co-Creation events

In Craigroyston (adjacent to Muirhouse) they are basing their community engagement approach on the Total Place Pilot projects developed in England²⁰. This model is about changing the relationship between service providers and people who “receive” the services.

They described this new relationship as more dynamic and equal where the experience and aspirations of local people and staff are used to achieve real long-term change. They are engaging with residents and people who work in the area to understand their experience of the area and to use their expertise to shape the future development of services.

To guide their work an action plan for engagement the “Total Craigroyston approach” has commenced. The consultancy Snook ²¹ was engaged to work with the community to create a road map which documents shared ideas for action to improve outcomes for children and families in the area.

Reflection point 6

- 6.1 Significant local community issues can be addressed without housing redevelopment. Using a community led approach to the development of a place-based action plan through engaging with residents and local service providers can improve outcomes important to the community, for the community.
- 6.2 The use of Road Maps for the development of action plans for place-based action can harness the enthusiasm, resources and commitment of local agencies and keep them engaged and accountable.

²⁰ <https://www.leadershipcentre.org.uk/totalplace/>

²¹ <https://wearesnook.com/>

Scottish National Standards for Community Engagement

The Scottish government has produced a best practice guide for community engagement in Scotland. The National Standards for Community Engagement²² were reviewed in 2016 following regulatory change through the introduction of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.

The guide outlines seven standards or steps that constitute best practice in community engagement.



Reflection point 7

- 7.1 Community engagement for large-scale regeneration projects is complex particularly where the life experiences of residents may present additional barriers. Regulation and best practice guides can build the capacity of participants in regeneration projects to more effectively engage with the communities they work with.

²² www.voicescotland.org.uk

Neighbourhood Management

I was taken on a walking tour of an area containing 6,500 social housing homes in Edinburgh. The area contains 16 high rise buildings, and as is replicated in other areas they have faced significant issues with poor quality design and construction, minimal maintenance, social issues, safety and stigma.

A new model based on people and place

The Council have changed their estate management model and are out and about more and engaging with people as the new starting point with regular walkabouts to engage informally where people live.

Increased accountability

The new approach that has been adopted is designed to be accountable, visible, and place-based. The use of formal action plans for each place with dates and deliverables makes them more accountable to the residents.

Engagement with residents

After listening to concerns at the high-rise sites people identified they wanted to feel safe and cared for. This is particularly important for people living alone. To address this grounds maintenance staff are now wear a uniform to identify who they are. The cleaning and a concierge service is on-site for 18 hours a day in each building and there is a hub point for the remaining 6 hours with a CCTV room 24/7.

Creating show homes for refurbishments

The engagement strategies for refurbishment work is interactive and accessible with mock ups of refurbished flats and the preparation of a show home to help communicate what work is going to be done. The process is participatory with identified elements that residents can choose what they would like. Contractors are introduced and attend engagement sessions at the site.

Reflection point 8

- 8.1 Getting out and about on estates, listening to the priorities of residents, and being accountable through formal action plans are all effective engagement strategies to make good places to live through the ongoing delivery of housing services.
- 8.2 The effective engagement strategies above will help to sustain the gains made in regeneration projects for the long term.

Dublin

“Just looking at the housing is mad, bad, sad and dangerous”.

Dr. Daithi Downey, Head of Research Dublin City Council

Introduction

In Dublin the views and experiences of a broad range of people in various roles involved in the Fatima Mansions and Dolphin House regeneration project were kindly shared with me. It was interesting to note that there was considerable agreement about what made this regeneration project so successful.

Consequently, I have captured the knowledge shared with me thematically. Some of the conversations were centred around community engagement quite broadly but the focus was on a site in Rialto; formerly Fatima Mansions which is now named Herberton Apartments.

Fatima Mansions and Dolphin House in Rialto Dublin

This social housing complex was built by the Dublin City Council around 1949 and Fatima Mansions consisted of 15 four storey blocks of 394 social housing flats and 8 shops. Fatima Mansions and Dolphin House were home to 5,000 in their heyday.

This link contains an archived video taken just prior to one of the demolition stages at Fatima Mansions.

<https://www.rte.ie/archives/2018/0808/983821-fatima-mansions-demolition/>

Fatima Mansions in 2003.

Photograph from <https://www.rte.ie/archives/2018/0808/983821-fatima-mansions-demolition/>



Brief history of Fatima Mansions

In the late 1970's/early 1980's, the estate began to go into a social decline. A report by Dr Mary P. Corcoran "*Making Fatima a Better Place to Live*"²³ found that the concept of "doing time in Fatima" was commonly used by residents to describe their experience of living there. The report also concluded that people had little control over their lives.

Fatima Mansions and Dolphin House residents were among the most disadvantaged in Ireland – experiencing high rates of early school leaving and family poverty.

Following three decades of community struggle, and a failed 1991 £5.5 million housing refurbishment project, the Fatima regeneration project was completed introducing the first mixed tenure (social and private housing) site in Dublin.

The Fatima regeneration is considered a flagship success with its quality mixed tenure housing, sports, leisure and health facilities including swimming pool, community centre and cafe, social enterprise and commercial space, all with outdoor playing surface.

Fatima post-renewal (renamed Herberton)



²³ Corcoran, M., (1998) *Making Fatima a Better Place to Live*, (unpublished), Dublin: Fatima Groups United.

Formal consultation and decision making

At an early stage in the planning the Dublin City Council established significant formal structures to oversee the project and formally engage with the community. It funded independent facilitators and a full-time Community Development Worker.

It established the Fatima Task Force, Regeneration Board and Social Agenda Working Groups. Each structure was a partnership that shared decision-making with the community.

For the project to start 72 families need to be moved to temporary accommodation and this was achieved by establishing a short-term Transition Group including residents and community representation to support residents and remove barriers.

There was a commitment to local decision making and community-based estate management and a project office was established on site. This marked a change in culture for the Dublin City Council. This was seen as one of the key elements of success and helped facilitate the project team to get to know the people and the area and created opportunities for informal engagement activity.

Legitimising community representation

The local community group Fatima Groups United (FGU) also established a formal structure, the Fatima Advisory Strategy Team which led their involvement in the regeneration.

To legitimise community representation the ballots were held.

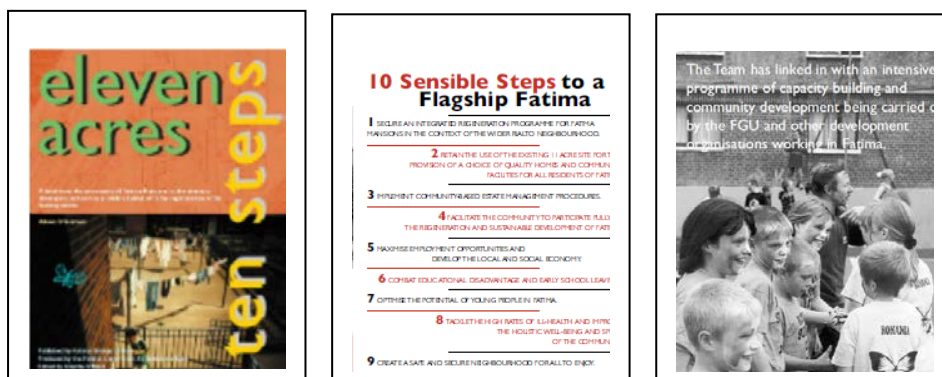


Residents taking the power and setting the agenda

A community development approach was taken by the local community group Fatima Groups United (FGU) and they led the community to take control of the agenda setting for the regeneration.

Rather than waiting to be consulted about the regeneration FGU researched, published, and publicised their own plan. The residents wanted the regeneration project to proceed and homes to be demolished but wanted to widen the scope of the project from housing to a broader social-economic approach.

The residents' plan was called *Eleven Acres: Ten Steps* and it clearly outlined what the residents wanted and how this should be achieved²⁴. The Dublin City Council then responded to this document with their regeneration plan *Regeneration/Next Generation: Looking Forward to a New Future for Fatima*.



Being newsworthy

Social housing estates in decline are generally not “newsworthy” unless the story is negative. In the case of Fatima, the community challenged how the estate was perceived well beyond the estate’s boundaries.²⁵

The community developed its capacity through FGU and worked hard to build powerful allies and communicate with a wide audience to gain support for the project and to remove the stigma associated with the area.

“However, 11 Acres, 10 Steps would have remained only a dust-collecting curiosity if we hadn’t done two key things; firstly we designed and produced it to the highest of standards so that it would have to be taken seriously and secondly, we launched it to huge national and local media fanfare so that it became the central reference for all the partners”

Dream! Dare! Do! (2006)²⁶

²⁴ Fatima Groups United (2000) *eleven acres: ten steps*. Fatima Groups United. Dublin. Available at <https://www.fgu.ie/index.php/regeneration>

²⁵ Conway, B., Corcoran, M. B., and Cahill L. P. (2011) *The “Miracle” of Fatima: Media framing and the regeneration of a Dublin housing estate*. Journalism, 13. Pp. 551-571. ISSN 1464-8849. Available at <http://eprints.maynoothuniversity.ie/8954/>

²⁶ Donohue, J., Dorman, P. (2006) *Dream! Dare! Do!* Dublin: Fatima Groups United, pg. 16

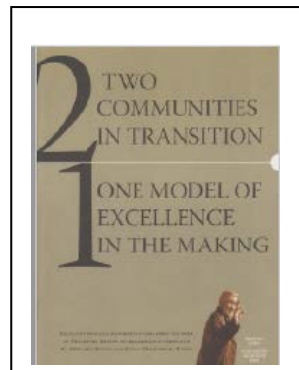
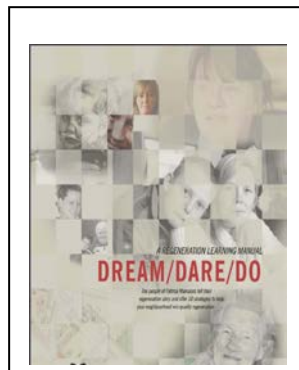
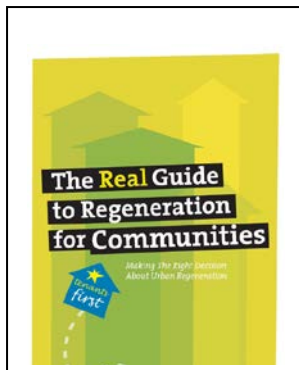
Residents empowering other communities

“Fatima has set the standard and awakened the ambitions of other neighbourhoods that yearn for regeneration. Fatima is now a place that others are looking to for advice and guidance – what a transformation – what a credit to the people of Fatima Mansions.”²⁷

Irish President McAleese

The successes and learnings in Fatima have been captured in written guides and shared to support other communities to set the agenda in regeneration programs in their communities. These documents are designed to help other communities that may lack the same level of community infrastructure to build their capacity to engage in future regeneration projects.

Fatima Groups United publications. Available at: <https://www.fgu.ie/index.php/regeneration>



²⁷ (12 November 2005) Available at <https://president.ie/en/media-library/speeches/remarks-by-president-mcaleese-during-a-visit-to-fatima-mansions-saturday-12>

Community development – Arts to facilitate Engagement

“The process of regeneration could risk lapsing into a somewhat bureaucratic, joyless and unimaginative affair in which the spirit and creative energy of local residents is lost rather than harnessed”.²⁸

Arts and cultural activities were seen as a critical step to building community capacity to participate in the decision-making of the regeneration, and to keep people interested. Formal meetings can be intimidating, and low literacy levels can preclude people from participating. Community events and celebrations were used to widen the number of people engaged in the regeneration process.

Original plays were performed, including to the Regeneration Board to tell resident's stories and identify and address key concerns in an entertaining way.

Key milestones of the project were acknowledged and celebrated, such as a bonfire the night before the demolition of homes. These key milestone events were also used to reframe the narrative about Fatima residents in the media.

Marking the demolition with a bonfire

Picture from Rialto Youth Project website <http://rialtoyouthproject.net/history>



²⁸ Fatima Groups United (2000), pg. 19

Art and young people

A focus of the arts programme at Fatima was to engage with excluded children and their families as well as reaching across all age groups.

Increasing pride and confidence through art was used as a tool to help existing residents have confidence and a sense of belonging on the estate after the regeneration. The community centre, its social enterprise café, and the ongoing arts activities at the centre of the estate were also tools to achieve ongoing inclusion after the project was finished. This was particularly important as the area is now a mixed tenure site with more privately-owned homes than social housing.

[A video of some of the art projects.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=waM9D7KosqY) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=waM9D7KosqY>

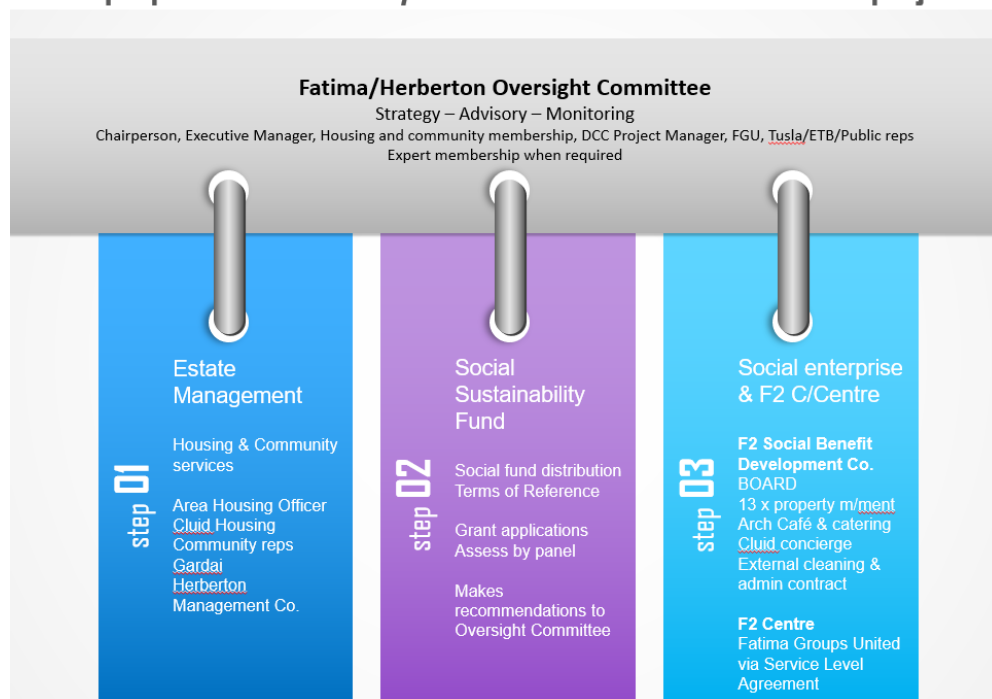


Sustainability after the project closes down

People live in their homes on regenerated housing estates long after the project team has left. Regeneration projects have been criticised for limited opportunities to continue the momentum once the construction has finished. Services and community development activities close as the funding is generally project time-limited.

In Fatima/Herberton the Dublin City Council is working to establish structures to sustain the benefits for the long-term. The project involved the purchase of 13 homes that were not sold, and the rental surplus is re-invested into the area through (what is proposed) to be a social benefit company. Income from contracts at the F2 Community Centre will also be available for ongoing social purposes.

DCC proposed sustainability framework – transition out of the project



Reflection point 9

- 9.1 Active citizenship and use of the media can change the power inequalities in a regeneration project and gather support for additional resources for social or economic purposes. The more this is resourced the better the outcomes for the community.
- 9.2 Embedding social enterprise or other social sustainability elements to the project is required to maintain the momentum after the project team has exited.

London – the Great Places Commission

“One blindingly obvious thing is it’s all about the people – everybody cares about the place that they live in and they want it to be better for their families and communities.”

Mark Henderson,

Chief Executive, Home Group and Great Places Commissioner

National Housing Federation

The National Housing Federation is an industry body representing providers of housing, much of this housing is affordable or social housing. It is a membership organisation representing the work of member housing associations and campaigns on a range of housing and social policy issues.

The Great Places Commission

My discussions with the National Housing Federation were focussed around the Great Places Commission. The Commission is exploring what makes a place great to live in, and how housing associations can contribute to the neighbourhoods they are part of.

The Commission is made up of leaders and practitioners from across the housing sector with direct experience of regeneration and place-making.

The Midlands and the North of England

In the first phase of the programme, the focus has been on the Midlands and the North of England. It has considered how to connect some of the most deprived neighbourhoods to opportunities and economic growth.

The process

They have visited towns and cities in the area and looked at existing research. The Great Places Commission engaged with residents, community organisations, housing associations, academics and civic leaders to discuss the challenges and opportunities in each place and the role that housing associations and partners can play in meeting them.

The background to regeneration for housing associations

Housing organisations work with the most disempowered and impoverished communities that have often been neglected or ill served by the system services and the economy.

Generally social housing regeneration projects are reliant upon grant funding and profits from housing sales. Reductions in funding and the reliance on market profits has made redevelopment opportunities counter-intuitive with regeneration not occurring unless there is a market uplift and/or high land values. This can mean the areas most in need of regeneration remain neglected and counter cycle projects are difficult.

Empowering the facilitators

It is not only the residents and other community members that can be disempowered but also in some instances, the housing providers themselves. They can be passive like the communities they work with, waiting for political will or funding to regenerate communities.

The aim of Great Places is to turn this around by sharing models amongst housing providers to create visions and facilitate change in the places they work

Focussing on 'what's strong, not what's wrong'

The Great Places Commission Interim Report²⁹ recently published suggests that by leveraging their strong local links, knowledge and networks, housing associations can inspire, support and equip communities with the resources to create positive change.

Focussing on 'what's strong, not what's wrong' within an asset-based community development approach and working in genuine partnership with local communities can support change.

Do no harm

Through conversations with residents and others the Commission concluded that housing associations have a responsibility to "do no harm".

They received feedback that disposing properties may have a negative impact on the community if they fall into disrepair or remain empty for a significant period after sale.

The Commission recommend ethical disposal policies which would incorporate local engagement into the process of assessing sales options and ideally local solutions to ensure the site continues to contribute to the community.

This notion of "do no harm" could also be applied to regeneration projects where buildings are demolished and left vacant for years or important local services close during the regeneration and are not returned until later stages. It could be a concept to be written into resident charters at the start of regeneration projects.

Improve the neighbourhood whilst waiting for regeneration to occur

The Commission has gathered best practice examples that have resulted from engaging with communities for positive change to improve the neighbourhood whilst waiting for regeneration to occur, to build capacity in case it does, and/or to gather momentum and help build a shared understanding of what the community wants regeneration to look like.

²⁹ <https://greatplaces.housing.org.uk/take-part/interim-report>

The Granby example

What has occurred in Granby is an example of a bottom-up approach to asset-based community development. Granby highlights that with simple changes made places can be nicer to live in and visit, and it demonstrated the pride and capacity of their community. It also reminded people that the community was still there, and still prepared to put up a fight.

Once a thriving place, the fortune faded in Granby in Toxteth with the decline of Liverpool's docks, leaving much of the area derelict and being eyed up for demolition.

A small group of determined residents had other ideas. To begin with, they started planting up the streets with flowers and ivy, painting the windows of derelict houses and leaving vases of empty flowers around the area.

The group also started a monthly street market with about 80 stalls which pulls people into the area.

In 2001, this group formed the Granby 4 Streets Community Land Trust³⁰, and by partnering with housing associations and the council, with a £14 m partnership investment they brought 110 properties back into use.



“It’s not just about getting the physical fabric of a place right, it’s about getting the community right.”³¹

Dr David Walker

Bishop of Manchester, Chair of
Wythenshawe Community Housing
Group and Great Places Commission

Reflection point 10

- 10.1 Active citizenship by members of the community can improve neighbourhoods without large-scale regeneration projects
- 10.2 Housing organisations can amplify their impact by unlocking the activism and action in the community. Simple actions such as providing resources, expertise or spaces to use, promoting their work, or simply bringing together different networks and organisations.

³⁰ <https://www.granby4streetsclt.co.uk/housingproject/>

Places for People

I went on a tour of the Olympic Park regeneration project and spoke to senior staff responsible for place-making and regeneration projects at Places for People.

Places for People is a large organisation with 190,000+ homes across England and Scotland. Their scale gives opportunity for cross subsidisation of regenerations in areas where the market is weak. Places for People balance their commercial approach with their values and their aim of trying to change the fundamentals of people's lives.

Their model includes developing other infrastructure and services as well as housing. They describe their approach as placemaking and this might include schools, training, access to work, lifestyle or support services.

Neighbourhood Strategy

Places for People have adopted a neighbourhood strategy that combines the perspective of people with data to highlight issues with an area. They build up a picture of the area with tenancy performance data overlaid with health, income and deprivation data, as well as customer satisfaction feedback.

They started this transition by asking tenants what a neighbourhood is to them, and this varied. For some people it was simply the view out of their window and for others it was a much larger area.

They noted that customers vote with their feet and move out of homes and areas they don't like, so looking at the feedback from turnover, length of tenure when someone moves out and refusals of properties you can identify where there are issues. Their software Neighbourhub has a traffic light system.

Once an area has been flagged amber or red they go out and talk to residents and other members of the community in neighbourhoods to plan a response and monitor the progress.

Considering the vast numbers of homes either vacant or being demolished across England this approach makes sense as a preventative measure to the disruption of demolishing and regenerating an area.

Democratisation of regeneration in London

Places for People introduced me to a new approach from the Mayor of London to require resident support for regeneration projects in London.

The Regulator of Social Housing Providers in England has a "light touch" approach in terms of resident engagement, and I was advised that resident engagement was not covered when I contacted the Regulator for a meeting during my visit to the UK.

Recently the Lord Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan has introduced a requirement for high level resident engagement including the requirement to gain majority consent from social housing tenants for a regeneration project from the outset of a planned project.



In February 2018 the Lord Mayor of London released

Better homes for local people: The Mayor's Good Practice Guide to Estate Regeneration.³¹

Whilst the Lord Mayor does not have direct powers the planning approval process will be used to assess projects where social housing is involved. Evidence of the consultative steps taken will be required.

In addition, where there is City Hall funding then a new requirement for residents in social housing to agree to demolition via a ballot process will apply.

Key points in the guide:

A resident ballot will be required giving residents of social housing the opportunity to say no to the demolition of their homes.

Early engagement is central, and residents should be given opportunities to be involved from the outset in developing the vision, options appraisals, design, procurement, and delivery.

Adequate support for residents to participate, and a tailored approach for people who might need it.

The provision of an independent advisor to be selected (and if desired de-selected) by the residents and paid by the landlord.

Residents should be the primary consultees during an estate regeneration project.

A Resident Charter to set out the commitments to residents at an early stage.

Reflection point 11

- 11.1 A neighbourhood strategy which genuinely listens and acts on tenant identified issues in combination with the use of data to identify needs and issues can effect positive change at the local level
- 11.2 Competing demands and the political nature of social housing regeneration projects can result in gaps in resident engagement processes and louder voices being heard. The introduction of a “mandatory” framework for projects can help address this power imbalance in favour of residents.
- 11.3 Resident charters can “lock in” the commitments to residents at an early stage in the regeneration project.

³¹ <https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/better-homes-for-local-people-the-mayors-good-practice-guide-to-estate-regeneration.pdf>

Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing

Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing is responsible for 57,000 homes as a result of a recent merger between Metropolitan Housing Trust (38,000 homes) and Thames Valley Housing (19,000 homes).

Metropolitan Thames Valley are responsible for a regeneration project in Clapham Park on 36 hectares involving 2,500 new homes, a community centre, shops, a park and other community facilities.

I was given a guided walk around the estate and had conversations with resident engagement specialists for the regeneration project and housing operations.

Clapham Park

Clapham Park is a culturally diverse community within the Thornton Ward of Lambeth, it has a higher number than average of people who are not working, a higher percentage of children living in sole parent households (54% to 27% average in England), and a high percentage of children living in poverty (26% compared to 20% average in England).

The area received funding for a decade under the former area-based New Deal for Communities Programme³² which facilitated resident-led activities and facilitated the creation of Clapham Park Homes Housing Association. Social housing was transferred from the Lambeth Council to Clapham Park Homes Housing Association and are now part of Metropolitan.

Neighbourhood investment in the project

Metropolitan has invested in community engagement with a Neighbourhood Investment Team based on the estate with a Neighbourhood Investment Lead, Neighbourhood Investment Officer, Employment Officer and Community Centre Coordinator.

Having “people on the ground” by locating housing and regeneration staff at Clapham Park was reported as important so the community could see people located and invested in their community, to build relationships informally and break down barriers. It also helps staff get to know and understand the community. Local housing staff help at engagement events by cooking the bar-b-que and other activities and this is useful to develop trust and rapport in an informal setting.

The centrality of a community centre to successful engagement and access to services is embedded into the regeneration project and a temporary facility has recently been established in the centre of Clapham Park. The new centre will be managed by a residents’ management committee who will also actively participate in the design and transition to the permanent centre.

³² <https://extra.shu.ac.uk/ndc/downloads/general/A%20final%20assessment.pdf>

Place-based community development

A place-based community development approach has been used at Clapham Park which;

Works with the community to identify local issues and solutions

Focuses on the three areas of most concern identified by residents including health and wellbeing, children and young people, and jobs and training

Is based upon evidence of successful practice and research

Engages with residents in the area including non-Metropolitan residents,

Builds relationships and platforms for engagement with traditionally “hard to reach” groups within the regeneration program

Monitoring and evaluation

To ensure the work is having an impact monitoring and evaluation is carried out monthly using performance targets under eight identified categories; Employment, Financial resilience, Health and wellbeing, Referrals, Resident engagement, Training (accredited and non-accredited), and Volunteering.

Basing practice on evidence

The use of evidence-based practice, research and data underpins the community engagement plan and activities. Some activities have been based on research by leading social change and race equality organisations The Rowntree Foundation³³ and The Runnymede Trust³⁴.



Focus on young people

Study Hub “Homework Club” and Tutors United

Providing educational support and a safe space to investigate ideas with their peers

Schools Out “Summer Programme”

Visiting museums and other spaces outside the estate.
Breakfast and lunch included. Foodbank accelerated in school holidays

On The Road

Support to obtain provisional driving licence

³³ <https://www.jrf.org.uk/about-us>

³⁴ <https://www.runnymedetrust.org/about.html>

Resident Engagement in the design process

To provide a range of options to engage a menu has been used at Clapham Park;

- **paper based**; newsletters, flyers and letters
- **experience based**; fun days, mock up floor plans, exhibitions
- **face to face**; door knocking, workshops, meetings, varying hours

How feedback has affected the Masterplan or other parts of the project is communicated back to the community. See the speech bubbles below as an example.



Face to Face engagement by local people

A recruitment campaign was launched on the estate for the employment of local Consultation Assistants on behalf of the architects. Two local residents and two Metropolitan residents from local estates were employed and were provided support and in-house and external training before they commenced.

The local Consultation Assistants carried out an estate wide face to face door knocking exercise over nine months to gain the thoughts of residents on the Master Plan using iPads and SurveyMonkey software. Follow up interviews were carried out at the Community Centre or the door. Reflections with the team were carried out monthly.

Resident engagement in services

Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing are considering new ways of engaging with tenants including;

- Internal audits. The "Mum's Test". Is it safe? Caring? Responsive? Well led?
- "Deep dive" strategies such as looking at the customer experience

Reflection point 12

- 12.1 Communicating how feedback has been incorporated into the project builds trust and facilitates continued engagement.
- 12.2 Using a menu of engagement activities supports people from a diverse range of backgrounds to dip in and out as they chose.

Conclusion

To effect successful change in social housing neighbourhoods we need to approach it with our head and our heart. We need structures, strategy and resources alongside our values, commitment and beliefs.

I have been both impressed and inspired by the passion and dedication of the community members and professionals I have met. I feel humbled that in this competitive world where housing organisations are forced to bid against each other for scarce resources that people so generously shared their time and knowledge with me.

Australia is slightly different to the three countries I visited in terms of the scale of the regeneration projects being undertaken and the geography and density of the social housing we take care of.

However, the challenges we face are similar. Wealth is not equally shared in our countries and the abandonment of some people in our society to entrenched poverty and disadvantage is shared.

Our practice in Australia is comparable in many ways but my Churchill Fellowship experiences lead me to believe that recognition of the following may assist us in being able to better hear the voices of people living in social housing to affect positive long-term change.

Be in it for the long haul

People living in social housing are living in their home before, during and after a regeneration project. The engagement strategies and service delivery model of the housing team before and after is as important as the intervention during the project. Consideration of the sustainability of engagement strategies and other programs introduced during a regeneration project should be built into the exit strategy in the initial planning stage.

Engage early

Building on this theme is reframing thinking to engage with residents earlier than is commonplace in Australia and handing over a more active decision-making role. Traditional project management thinking (such as PMBOK) looks at engagement when the project starts and incorporates stakeholder engagement throughout the life of the project. Ballots have been used in the past and are being reintroduced in London in the UK to engage with residents on whether they want their homes demolished to participate in regeneration from the outset.

Being open and accountable

Resident engagement occurs along a spectrum from informing to genuine empowerment and decision making. There has been a tendency to work at one end of the scale in Australia and to consider the provision of information as the extent of engagement activities. Information about the purpose and extent of an engagement activity would increase transparency and help residents better decide whether to engage or potentially opt out and use another avenue to have their views heard. The increased use of action plans and Resident Charters for projects and ongoing housing management that are agreed, shared and regularly measured can provide a framework to enable tenants to hold the project or housing organisation accountable.

Share the wealth

Regeneration projects generate employment and economic benefit. There is an opportunity to use this for engagement with the community living in the area to share the economic benefit. Contracts with developers, builders, architects and planners create an opportunity for training and employment and pathways into work.

Share the power

There is a stronger culture of community activism and an active citizenship role for social housing tenants and the community more broadly in the countries I visited. All countries visited had formal mechanisms to support tenants to participate more fully in civic life which extends far beyond the consumerist approach adopted in Australia.

As a profession we need to embrace the wider definition of community engagement and not be afraid of amplifying the voice of our customers. This can be successful in diverting precious resources into areas of neglect to gain better outcomes for our communities. There could be a role for tenant organisations and other structures in the broader sector to support this.

Formal and informal mechanisms

Formal decision-making mechanisms such as participation in boards and sub-committees and Resident Charters need to sit beside informal consultative and community-based methodologies in the engagement toolbox.

Build the capacity of the community

Regeneration projects are complex with many stages and a great deal of technical knowledge can required to participate, particularly if part of governance and formal decision-making structures. Capacity building to facilitate social housing customers to meaningfully participate is important.

The professionals need support too

In Australia large-scale regeneration projects are rare and until recent times when they occurred they were managed by public housing professionals. Professionals in the social housing sector more broadly need help building their capacity. There are few tools such as good practice guides for community engagement or targeted professional development opportunities readily available and this affects the not-for-profit, government, and regulatory workforce equally.

“The process of regeneration could risk lapsing into a somewhat bureaucratic, joyless and unimaginative affair in which the spirit and creative energy of local residents is lost rather than harnessed”.³⁵

Have fun and take a community development approach

Arts and cultural activities can be a critical step to building community capacity to participate in the decision-making of the regeneration. A community development approach with a focus on community-based activity and projects can support broader regeneration project aims to make positive change at the individual and community level. Arts projects can reach a wider audience and break down barriers for people who are socially isolated and “hard to reach”.

This approach takes time and needs to be adequately resourced.

Aligning the contract and the resources with the aims of the project

Social housing regeneration projects are usually attempting to try and improve a lot of things, poverty and inequalities, social isolation and stigma as well as the housing and public realm. In Australia projects are often “housing only” but are expected to achieve positive change on multiple fronts.

These projects are funded and facilitated by government and it is important that the goals of a regeneration project are clearly articulated at the outset, that the resources required to achieve these goals including adequate community engagement are identified and made available.

Sharing my experiences

I have written this report in a way that openly shares both my learnings from my visit and the resources I discovered along the way within the document. It has made it long but hopefully useful.

The next step for me is to both introduce my learnings to my own organisation as a starting point for change, but also to run workshops through the social housing sector’s professional body the Australasian Housing Institute.

I also plan to create conversations about tenant activism and how we can better support this in the wider community.

³⁵ Fatima Groups United (2000), pg. 19