

GoWell is a collaborative partnership between the Glasgow Centre for Population Health, the University of Glasgow and the MRC Social and Public Health Sciences Unit, sponsored by Glasgow Housing Association, the Scottish Government, NHS Health Scotland and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde.

Two stylized human silhouettes. The larger one on the left is teal and contains the title text. The smaller one on the right is grey and contains the date. Both are simplified shapes with a circular head and a rounded, open-bottom torso.

**Area reputation:
An examination
of newspaper
coverage of the
Sighthill estate**

February 2010

GoWell is a planned ten-year research and learning programme that aims to investigate the impact of investment in housing, regeneration and neighbourhood renewal on the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities. It commenced in February 2006 and has a number of different research components. This paper is part of a series of Briefing Papers which the GoWell team has developed in order to summarise key findings and policy and practice recommendations from the research. Further information on the GoWell Programme and the full series of Briefing Papers is available from the GoWell website at: www.gowellonline.com



AREA REPUTATION: THE ISSUE

Some places suffer from stigma; they have reputations as ‘bad’ places to live or as dangerous places to visit, for example. They are generally considered by the residents of a town or city as places of low desirability, indeed as places where only those with no choice would reside. These area reputations are hard to shift and they also have enduring effects upon those who live there. These effects include receiving poorer private and public services, feelings of shame or hurt for residents, curtailed social networks, and disadvantage in the labour market through ‘post-code discrimination’¹. Any attempt to ‘transform’ such places through a regeneration programme, therefore, has to either hope, or better still intend, to try to change the area’s reputation. To do that, one needs to understand what sort of image a place has to start with, and what underlines that reputation. In other words, what are the issues that give a place a negative reputation?

In Glasgow, there are eight Transformational Regeneration Areas, three of which are included in the GoWell Programme. We decided to examine the reputation of one of these areas, Sighthill, through its coverage in the print media. We know from the GoWell Wave 2 community survey that nearly two-thirds (63%) of residents in Sighthill think the area has a poor reputation across the city, that is, they agreed with the statement that ‘Many people in Glasgow think this neighbourhood has a bad reputation’. This is a much higher figure than found in other social housing areas, for example 41% of people who live in our Housing Improvement Areas² agreed with the statement. Most areas dominated by social housing tend to have a somewhat negative reputation, but for an area like Sighthill, it appears to be worse.

We can see some of the psychological effects of factors such as area reputation in the responses to another of our questions in the community survey. When asked whether ‘Living in this neighbourhood helps make me feel I am doing well in life’, only 30% of residents in Sighthill agreed, compared with over twice this number (68%) in the group of Housing Improvement Areas. Thus, acquiring a sense of personal progress through where you live may be undermined if you live in an area that you think has a bad reputation. Changing an area’s reputation may therefore be good for the wellbeing of residents as well as good for the future of an area (e.g. in terms of future housing demand).

¹ See Dean and Hastings (2000) *Challenging Images: Housing estates, stigma and regeneration*. Bristol: Policy Press.

² Housing Improvement Areas are considered to be relatively popular social housing areas with good quality housing stock and a significant proportion of owner occupation, mostly through the Right to Buy, and include such areas as Carntyne, Riddrie and Townhead.



WHY STUDY MEDIA COVERAGE?

Reputations, whether of people, places or firms, are constructed and maintained through direct experience, through word-of-mouth and, importantly, through the consumption of media images and reports. The notion that media – and in particular newspaper – coverage could contribute to the formation and/or maintenance of an area's reputation seems entirely plausible and has been argued by researchers before. For example, in their account of the historical trajectory of the negative reputation of the Raploch area of Stirling, Robertson et al (2008) discuss how the area's reputation and stigmatised status was sustained through press reports of local crime and which also referred to the Raploch area as somehow separate from the rest of the district. Similarly, Flint et al (2007), in a study of two deprived neighbourhoods in Liverpool and Edinburgh argue that a 'problem reputation or local infamy' can arise from factors such as mythology, local history and press coverage. After conducting one of the few attempts to try to 'quantify community reputation' McLaren et al (2005) concluded that 'yes, social identities of places are reflected in and projected by the media' (p.192).

We therefore decided to look at media coverage of Sighthill as this was likely to be a widespread source of the area's reputation. Although word-of-mouth may play a greater part in the reputation of the area for people engaged with the social housing system in Glasgow (wherein reports of popular and unpopular places may be heard and play a part in people's choices in the allocations and transfer processes), for the many people unfamiliar with the estate the media would play an important role. We were also aware that Sighthill had featured in the media many times in recent years, and a study for the Scottish Government by TNS System Three (2008) reported that newspapers were the main source of local news for people, far more than television, which dominated as a source for national and international news. In addition, for news on social issues, newspapers were very close behind television as a main source. We therefore felt it appropriate to examine newspaper coverage of the estate if we wished to find out what sort of reputation the area was experiencing.



METHODS

We used on-line electronic archives to search for, identify and categorise newspaper articles about the Sighthill estate. We focused on three different types of Glasgow-based newspapers: The Herald/Sunday Herald (a broadsheet newspaper); the Evening Times (an afternoon/evening tabloid newspaper); and the Daily Record/Sunday Mail (a morning, tabloid newspaper). The main on-line source used was Newsbank's 'Access World News' online archive (<http://infoweb.newsbank.com>), as this gave access to both abstracts and full articles. However, this database was found to be missing articles for a small number of dates, and so in these cases was supplemented by the use of two other databases: the archive of the Newsquest Media Group for the Herald and Evening Times (<http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/smgpubs/advancedsearch.html>) and the archive of High Beam research for the Daily Record (www.highbeam.com).

We aimed to examine ten years worth of newspaper coverage, although the availability of articles through Newsbank's archive varied for each newspaper. In the end our period of study was as follows:

- January 1998 to August 2009 for The Herald/Sunday Herald
- January 2001 to August 2009 for the Daily Record/Sunday Mail
- January 2002 to August 2009 for the Evening Times

A number of articles found were deemed not to be about the estate itself or not to convey any image at all (e.g. sports scores). The remaining articles were categorised according to the image of the estate they conveyed to a reader with little independent knowledge of the estate. This was based on such factors as the volume of text of a particular kind, the positioning of comments about the estate within the article as a whole, the proportion of the article that was about Sighthill, and the tone or seriousness of the article. Some articles could not be categorised due to non-availability of the full article on-line, though the vast majority were capable of being evaluated and categorised. Articles were categorised as: positive; negative; mixed; or neutral (i.e. Sighthill was important to the article's purpose, but it did not convey an evaluative image of the estate). Letters published in newspapers were treated as articles for the purposes of this analysis since they occupy print-space and are readily available for reader consumption. Multiple articles on the same page were treated as a single article.

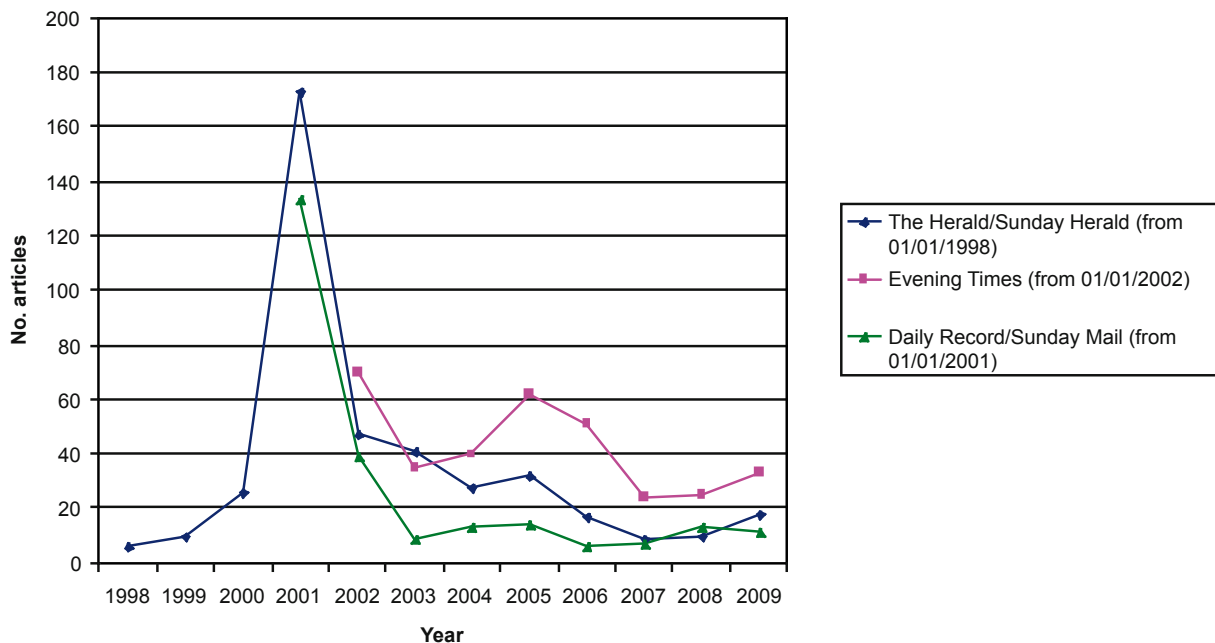
The large majority of the articles were categorised by a single researcher. As a check, a randomly selected 8% of over 700 articles (identified up to August 2008) were also examined and categorised by a second researcher, which resulted in a 23% rate of discrepancy between the two researchers. Since most of these discrepancies related to articles categorised as 'mixed', all 175 'mixed' articles identified up to that point were re-examined by both researchers. As a result of this stage, one-in-seven of the mixed articles were re-categorised into another category. Through discussion between the researchers, some refinements were then made to the criteria for categorisation before the final year's articles were examined by a single researcher.



THE QUANTITY OF SIGHTHILL COVERAGE

The Sighthill estate has received fluctuating levels of coverage from each Glasgow-based newspaper over the last 12 years. In total, over this period, a total of 1,002 articles referring to Sighthill were identified.

Figure 1: Newspaper Coverage of Sighthill 1998 - 2009



Within this overall coverage of the estate, we identified the following patterns:

- **There have been two peaks in Sighthill coverage, in 2001 and in 2005.**
The first peak in coverage came in 2001 due to the murder of Firsat Dag in August of that year and the housing of asylum seekers in the estate more generally. The second peak came in 2005 (though only in The Herald and the Evening Times) due to a combination of events including the Glasgow Housing Association (GHA) announcement of the housing regeneration programme, the decision to demolish tower blocks in the Fountainwell area of Sighthill, the possibility of Sighthill being the athletes' village should Glasgow win its 2014 Commonwealth Games bid, and the murder of Stephen Daly in Sighthill near the footbridge of the M8 motorway.
- **Since 2004, the Evening Times has carried significantly more stories about Sighthill than the other two papers.**
On average, from 2002 to 2009, the Evening Times printed twice as many articles about the estate compared to The Herald, and four times as many articles as the Daily Record. As a result, the Evening Times covered a number of stories that were not reported by the other papers (or that weren't covered to the same degree). These included the North Glasgow International Festivals each year,



THE QUANTITY OF SIGHTHILL COVERAGE CONT'D

events involving the primary schools and nurseries in the Sighthill area (including their planned closures in 2009), and resident opposition to GHA demolition plans in the estate.

- **Coverage of the estate dropped in the second half of the period.**

After 2003 the Daily Record's coverage of Sighthill dropped significantly with an average of only ten articles on Sighthill per year from 2003-2007 compared to 39 in 2002 and 133 in 2001. After 2005 both The Herald's and the Evening Times' coverage also dropped by over half by 2007.

- **Coverage of Sighthill increased slightly at the end of the period, partly due to television interest in the estate.**

In 2008 coverage of Sighthill increased in the Daily Record, due mainly to the showing of a TV documentary 'Sighthill Stories' on BBC. In 2009, coverage of the area by The Herald increased, primarily due to a dawn raid on an asylum seeker living in Sighthill, the first such raid in Glasgow for a year.



THE BALANCE OF SIGHTHILL COVERAGE

Categorising articles on Sighthill allowed us to examine how the three newspapers have covered the estate over the years, and consequently what image of Sighthill they have most likely given to their readers. As already noted, the categorisation of these articles was based on an assessment of what impression of Sighthill a person with little knowledge of the estate would get from reading each article.

Of the 1,002 articles about Sighthill, 94% (n=938) could be categorised in terms of the opinion or impression they gave of the estate. The main findings of this analysis are as follows:

- **The impression given of the estate by newspaper coverage is predominantly a negative one. Negative coverage outweighs any other type of coverage, and positive articles are very much in the minority.**

Over the entire period from 1998 to 2009, the balance of coverage was as follows:

Negative articles	46%
Mixed articles	20%
Neutral articles	24%
Positive articles	10%



If we consider that mixed articles contain negative material about the estate (as well as material of other tones), then up to two-thirds of all articles might contain material that gives a negative impression of Sighthill.

For each newspaper, for almost every year from 1998 to 2002, negative articles have consistently been the largest category. There are only a few exceptions to this rule.

- **The Daily Record/Sunday Mail is identified to be the most negative in its coverage of Sighthill, and the Evening Times to be the most positive. The Herald lies somewhere between these.**

The Evening Times has the largest proportion of positive articles about Sighthill. However, because it publishes so many more articles on Sighthill than the other newspapers, it has in fact published as many negative articles about Sighthill in the 2002-2009 period as the other two newspapers combined.

The Herald publishes the most neutral articles about Sighthill, and the lowest number of entirely positive articles. Almost two-thirds of the Daily Record/Sunday Mail's articles are either negative or mixed in their tone.

The table below shows the balance of coverage for each of the three newspapers in the period 2002-2009 (for which equivalent information is available for all three newspapers).

Balance of Sighthill Coverage by Newspaper, 2002-2009*

	The Herald (%)	Evening Times (%)	Daily Record/Sunday Mail (%)
Negative	41	37	50
Mixed	17	19	14
Neutral	35	29	25
Positive	7	15	11
Total number of articles	100 (185)	100 (324)	100 (111)

*January 2002 to August 2009

- **The largest peak in the coverage of Sighthill (2001), was the year most dominated by negative coverage.**
In that year, 58% of The Herald's coverage was negative in tone, reflecting the dominant subject matter that year, the murder of Firsat Dag.



NEGATIVE STORIES ABOUT SIGHTHILL

Negative stories about Sighthill predominantly related to three themes:

- Asylum seekers and refugees
- Violence and crime
- The poor environment on the estate

Asylum seekers and refugees

In the peak year of 2001, 77% of the 173 negative articles published by The Herald and the Daily Record referred to asylum seekers and refugees. Since then, the coverage has dropped but remains a significant element: 34% of all negative articles published by all three newspapers over the period 2002-2009 referred to the topic of asylum seekers and refugees in Sighthill.

The negative coverage about Sighthill and asylum seekers and refugees concentrated on a number of issues:

- **Violent attacks on asylum seekers and refugees.** This included Firsat Dag's murder in 2001, but also many other attacks since, often described as 'racist' in nature. This is a notable amount of coverage.
- **'Racial tension' on the estate.** Articles on this topic, and the 'crisis' of relations between Sighthill residents and asylum seekers and refugees were prominent both in the months leading up to, and the months after, Firsat Dag's murder. Also discussed were warnings of a possible 'backlash' to the numbers of asylum seekers and refugees on the estate, and reports of attempts to evict 'racist tenants' in the area.
- **BNP activity in Sighthill.** This was again given coverage both before and after Firsat Dag's murder.
- **Misguided integration policies.** The anniversary of Firsat Dag's murder has been used to highlight subsequent racial tensions, said to be indicative of the 'dark days' of community relations and the failure of 'misguided' integration policies for asylum seekers and refugees.
- **Sighthill as emblematic of Scotland.** Sighthill is used to discuss Scottish attitudes to race and immigration, and especially asylum seekers. Sighthill has been described as the exception to a 'tolerant' Scotland, and as a threat to Glasgow's image as a city of tolerance. At other times, Sighthill is presented as indicative of growing racism in the country.

- **Sympathy for asylum seekers and refugees.** Sighthill has been used to criticise asylum dispersal policy for placing asylum seekers in a ‘run-down’, ‘deprived’ estate. The poor living conditions for asylum seekers and refugees on the estate have been described, and concern expressed for their social and psychological wellbeing.

Violence and crime

The reporting of attacks on asylum seekers can also be considered as part of another large trend in negative coverage of Sighthill: reporting on violence and crime in the area in general. From 2001-2003 these stories mainly concerned attacks on asylum seekers in Sighthill, as well as, though to a much lesser extent, violence on the part of asylum seekers themselves. More recently stories on violence and crime in the estate have expanded beyond asylum seekers and refugees, including:

- **Regular reports of assaults in Sighthill.** Such stories have represented a sizable amount of negative coverage of the estate, especially from 2004 to 2006, and such stories continue to be covered into 2009 – of the assaults covered, a large proportion have been described as racist attacks, often carried out by ‘gangs’.
- **Murders in Sighthill.** These have been of asylum seekers on the estate, permanent residents, and people who were in Sighthill at the time.
- **Housebreakings and muggings** on the estate in 2002, particularly of pensioners.
- **Vandalism** on the estate.
- **Drug raids on homes** in 2002.
- **Robberies**, particularly of Sighthill Post Office in late 2006.
- **Discussion of the ‘Young Sighthill Mafia’**, a gang operating in Sighthill.
- **Criminal involvement in security firms** guarding tower blocks scheduled for demolition in Sighthill.

As well as reporting on violent or criminal incidents in Sighthill, the estate was often referred to outside these actual stories as being a violent area in general. In the period around Firsat Dag’s murder, the estate was often described as “**troubled**”; in later years, one of the most used words to describe Sighthill was “**notorious**”.



NEGATIVE STORIES ABOUT SIGHTHILL CONT'D

Police statistics describing Sighthill as having high levels of serious violence and assaults have been covered over the years. Readers' letters to the newspapers have also described Sighthill as a violent and criminal place, "nothing but a haven for drug users, gangs etc". Racially motivated crime was often singled out in articles as being a particular problem in Sighthill; again this was compounded by coverage of police statistics on the estate, as well as by coverage of reports on the living conditions of asylum seekers in Glasgow which noted racist behaviour towards them as a problem. The overall impression given over the years due to this coverage is that Sighthill has been and continues to be a violent crime-infested place.

The poor environment on the estate

Negative stories on Sighthill frequently depicted the estate as "**deprived**" and "**run-down**". In the years up to 2003 such references were often made in relation to criticism of 'dumping' asylum seekers in an area such as Sighthill. In more recent years references to the estate as having a 'high level of deprivation' have often been made in the context of regeneration plans. In newspaper coverage, Sighthill has effectively been "an area whose name is synonymous with deprivation".

As the years have gone on, negative coverage of the estate's environment has involved the following:

- **Poverty** on the estate – following Firsat Dag's murder, visits by politicians and well-known figures such as the Prince of Wales to the estate prompted references to the levels of deprivation.
- **The closure in 2003 of allotments** on the estate due to the discovery of arsenic, an issue that has sporadically reappeared in coverage over the years.
- **Poor environmental services.** Reporting on research studies that found Sighthill and other areas of Glasgow's north-east to have low standards of street cleaning and refuse collection.
- **Overcrowding.** Reporting on studies that found asylum seekers in Sighthill lived in overcrowded flats.
- **Fires** in tower blocks on the estate.
- **Negative Equity.** More recently, the vulnerability of Sighthill homeowners to negative equity from the housing market decline due to the economic downturn.
- **'A dump'**. Also more recently, readers' letters describing the estate as "a dump" as an argument against those opposed to demolitions.



MIXED STORIES ABOUT SIGHTHILL

There is predictably some overlap between mixed and negative stories about Sighthill: in particular, asylum seeker issues comprise a large proportion of mixed coverage. But there are also issues presented in mixed stories that are not discussed in negative coverage; the most prominent of these was GHA regeneration plans for the estate and opposition to them from some Sighthill residents.

Asylum seekers

As with the negative stories about Sighthill, references to asylum seekers and refugees reached their peak in 2001, when 91% of The Herald's, and 68% of the Daily Record's mixed coverage involved this topic. Since then, 45% of the 120 mixed articles published by all three papers from 2002-2009 referenced asylum seekers and refugees. This said, references to asylum seekers and refugees in mixed stories had dropped significantly by 2007.

The mixed coverage involving asylum seekers in Sighthill focused on different issues, or approached the same issues from a different angle, to the equivalent negative stories, leading to a more balanced image of the estate. Among the issues presented were:

- **The link between 'racial tension' and poverty in Sighthill.** Mixed articles in the months and years following Firsat Dag's murder acknowledged tensions between residents and asylum seekers but frequently argued that those tensions were the result of the estate being "neglected" and reduced to "one of Glasgow's most poverty-stricken housing estates" – such articles placed the blame for this neglect on GHA, Glasgow City Council and the Scottish and UK Governments, with some of these arguments coming in the form of readers' letters.
- **Criticism of policy.** Linked to the above, there was criticism of the national policy of asylum seeker dispersal on the grounds that it directly led to racial tension in Sighthill by placing asylum seekers in such a deprived estate.
- **The majority are welcoming.** It was argued that racism in Sighthill is restricted to a 'hard-core minority' and that most people on the estate have welcomed asylum seekers and refugees. Such arguments often came from readers' letters criticising either media coverage of the estate or comments made by political figures.
- **Cohesive community.** Reports argued that relations between Sighthill residents and asylum seekers had improved and that the estate had 'turned a corner' or had been 'turned around' due to efforts following Firsat Dag's murder (itself sometimes described as a 'turning point') – many of these articles hinged these improved relations on the 'integration' of asylum seekers into the Sighthill community, or described the estate as having 'accepted its multi-ethnic identity'.



MIXED STORIES ABOUT SIGHTHILL CONT'D

- **Anti-racism.** In the years immediately prior to and following Firsat Dag's murder, possible and actual BNP activity in Sighthill was reported, but alongside the responses of anti-racism groups.
- **Integration policy efforts.** Articles reported Glasgow City Council efforts and initiatives to try to combat racism in Sighthill.

Regeneration plans and opposition

The possibility of regeneration in Sighthill was first reported in late 2003 by the Evening Times in an article on GHA's Statement of Intent. The article reported that "it is clear GHA bosses are eager to seal the fate of some of the city's most notorious high-rise schemes, including the Red Road flats and Sighthill, sooner rather than later".

A large proportion of Sighthill coverage referring to the regeneration programme from 2004-2009 gave a mixed image of the estate. This was for a number of reasons:

- **A housing estate in need.** Regeneration coverage obviously referred first to the possibility and then the actual event of demolitions of tower blocks on the estate. These conveyed the image of a housing estate that needed to be demolished because it was deprived or troubled. In general, references to the regeneration of Sighthill portrayed the estate as disadvantaged and thus in need of help.
- **Residents having to cope.** Initial reports of regeneration in Sighthill described residents as being fearful of the possibility of demolitions, with the 'fate' of the estate seen to be in question. As the regeneration programme got under way, reports described Sighthill residents as 'trying to cope' with demolitions in the "decaying housing scheme".
- **Residents fighting to save their homes.** Coverage of the regeneration plans often referenced the Sighthill Save Our Homes campaign and relayed their arguments that most Sighthill residents were dissatisfied with GHA and were opposed to the demolitions. The image given of the estate was thus a mixed one, of residents fighting to save their homes from demolition. This continued into 2009, with the decision by some Sighthill residents to set up a community council described as "launching a fight to save [residents'] homes from the wrecking ball", leading to newspaper editorials calling on GHA to "[t]ell tenants what the future holds" and to listen to their concerns.

- **Readers' letters criticising GHA and their opponents.** Over the last year or so, reports of opposition to the demolition of the Sighthill tower blocks have led to many reader letters on the issue being published in newspapers. Approximately two-thirds of these letters have criticised those opposed to demolitions for being unrepresentative and for having unsound reasoning for wanting to keep the tower blocks. No matter what these letter-writers thought of the efforts of Sighthill campaigners, the vast majority also criticised GHA regarding its decision-making processes and the lack of information provided by it to residents.

It should also be noted that the initial newspaper coverage of GHA's decision in the summer of 2005 to demolish five tower blocks in Sighthill painted the estate in a negative rather than mixed light. Headlines included "Demolition order on deprived area's flats" and statements such as "Another infamous Glasgow high-rise housing scheme is to be pulled down".



POSITIVE STORIES ABOUT SIGHTHILL

Unlike the mixed coverage of Sighthill, positive stories on the estate touched on markedly different topics compared to negative articles. The positive coverage of the area has however been overshadowed by negative coverage. Four topics are of particular interest: the North Glasgow International Festival held in Sighthill; the projects and successes of primary schools and a youth centre in Sighthill; recognition given to people from or working in Sighthill; and the regeneration programme.

North Glasgow International Festival

Over the years, each newspaper has devoted coverage to the North Glasgow International Festival held in Sighthill, with a sizable proportion of the positive coverage on the estate from 2002 onwards focused on this yearly event. The Festival was frequently described as celebrating the "cultural diversity" and "multi-cultural character" of Sighthill by bringing locals and asylum seekers together, encouraging "integration" and "harmony". The Festival received coverage from 2002-2005, but since then has received no coverage.

Primary schools and youth centre

One way in which Sighthill has been portrayed in a positive light over the past decade is from the perspective of the estate's primary schools and youth centre. While sometimes stories of this nature have merely highlighted the successes of these institutions separately from other issues relating to Sighthill, often these positive stories have involved efforts by these groups to combat problems on the estate reported elsewhere, especially racial tension:

POSITIVE STORIES ABOUT SIGHTHILL CONT'D

- **Sighthill Youth Centre.** Positive coverage of Sighthill involving the Sighthill youth centre primarily occurred in the months after Firsat Dag's murder, with the centre presented as an example of "people of different colours... liv[ing], work[ing], and play[ing] together". There were also references to the centre along similar lines in some mixed coverage of the estate and the centre also appeared in a small amount of positive (and mixed) coverage in the years after Dag's murder, in the context of it receiving funding from the Scottish Government, from Prince Charles during his visit to the estate, and through lottery funds.
- **Primary Schools.** More frequent (though still very small compared to issues in mixed or negative coverage) were references to primary schools in the Sighthill area that conveyed a positive image of the estate, such as:
 - Coverage was given to Sighthill Primary in the context of awards for community involvement and anti-litter campaigning.
 - St Stephen's Primary in Sighthill was noted in 2005 for its being shortlisted for the Scottish Education Awards.
 - Both schools have also been covered for their anti-racism initiatives, including musical involvement in the North Glasgow International Festival, involvement in Glasgow City Council's Inspiration Arts Festival, St Stephen's adoption of the "world's first multi-cultural tartan" as part of a Glasgow-wide 'Sense Over Sectarianism' campaign, and the promotion of racial awareness as part of Black History Month.
 - References to primary schools welcoming refugee children through the efforts of teachers and the openness of pupils were also made.

The overall impression given by this coverage is that Sighthill's primary schools have successfully tackled or avoided the kind of racial tension seen to exist in the rest of the estate.

Recognition of people from or working in Sighthill

Some of the positive coverage involved people connected to Sighthill who had been recognised for their talents, skills or work on the estate:

- **Awards for individuals.** News stories reported on particular individuals from Sighthill who had received awards or recognition for their abilities:
 - The teenage ballet dancer and 'Billy Elliot of Sighthill' Steven McMahan, who won a place at and then graduated from a New York dance school.
 - The volunteer worker Alice Bell who was awarded an OBE in 2003 for her work in a Sighthill community centre.

- The former minister of St Rollox Parish Church, Rev. Gwynfai Jones, also received coverage that year when he and his wife Elspeth received the MBE for their work in helping and supporting asylum seekers in Sighthill, work which was again recognised when Rev. Jones died in 2006.
- **The talents and skills of asylum seekers** living in Sighthill were also recognised, albeit infrequently.
 - Coverage of the Glasgow Mela Festival in 2002 mentioned that young people and asylum seekers from Sighthill were collaborating on the making of short films.
 - Asylum seekers in Sighthill were recognised in reports on special retraining schemes for refugee doctors and nurses in Scotland.
 - In 2005 an 11-year-old Kosovan immigrant living in Sighthill received coverage for landing the lead role in a film being made by the RSAMD.
- **Recognition for Sighthill Workers.** Positive coverage also discussed people not from but working in Sighthill who had received recognition.
 - In 2003 Strathclyde Police received the Excellence Award from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) for their organisation of the North Glasgow International Festival in Sighthill.
 - In 2004 Martin McGarvey from Castlemilk was nominated for the Princes Trust's 'Coach of the Year' title for his work in helping youngsters and refugees in Sighthill.

Regeneration programme

From 2004 onwards, a significant portion of positive coverage of Sighthill has related to the regeneration programme.

- **Investment.** Initial coverage of GHA's plans was positive as they related to announcements of millions of pounds of investment in the estate.
- **Housing Revolution and Transformation of the Estate.** Later positive coverage described the redevelopment of schemes such as Sighthill and the building of new homes as plans which would "revolutionise the city's housing", with the emphasis on benefiting or transforming Sighthill creating a positive image of the estate. Unlike regeneration coverage in mixed articles on Sighthill, these positive articles primarily outlined GHA's own view on the effects and merits of regeneration.
- **Residents' Triumph.** In 2009, the announcement that certain blocks were not going to be demolished led to a positive image of Sighthill. This coverage portrayed the decision as a victory for Sighthill's tenants and an acknowledgment by GHA of the wishes of Sighthill residents.



NEUTRAL STORIES ABOUT SIGHTHILL

Articles about Sighthill that did not actually give an evaluative image of the estate are harder to categorise than those that do convey a particular image. They tend not to be based around specific ‘themes’ of the estate but instead discuss a wide range of issues that can be analysed by the papers without necessarily discussing Sighthill’s physical or social condition. The issues detailed below do not account for all neutral coverage, since there were many neutral stories that covered a specific event in only one article, making generalisation difficult. Nevertheless, patterns in the neutral coverage can be broadly identified in terms of recurring events or scenarios.

Asylum seekers

A large proportion of neutral stories were about asylum seekers or refugees living in Sighthill. Just over 42% of all 191 neutral articles on Sighthill referenced asylum seekers or refugees. Neutral coverage focused around asylum seekers on the estate included the following:

- **Dawn Raids.** Coverage of dawn raids on asylum seekers living in Sighthill began in 2004 and continued through to 2007. In 2009, the first dawn raid in a year prompted renewed coverage. Coverage also sometimes included community responses in Sighthill such as ‘dawn patrols’.
- **Deportations.** Linked to the above, there were stories about threatened and actual deportations of asylum seekers who had been living Sighthill. Specifically, this included the cases of Valentina Panxhi and her children in 2002, the Alhiatly family in 2005 and 2006, Makielokele Nzelengi Daly and his family in 2005, Ismet Hyseni in 2006, and Fatou Felicite Gaye and her son Arouna in 2009.
- **Firsat Dag’s Murder.** Mainly in 2001, some articles focused on Firsat Dag’s murder did not discuss Sighthill in any depth. An example of such an article would be one that, rather than saying he was murdered in Sighthill, said instead that he had been housed in Sighthill in April 2001.
- **Articles about asylum seeker policies** or initiatives which mentioned that a large number of asylum seekers were located in Sighthill, but said no more than that about the estate.

Regeneration, GoWell and the Commonwealth Games

Some of the neutral coverage in later years has involved the GHA redevelopment programme. Regeneration articles that were neutral rather than mixed or positive tended to briefly mention Sighthill while talking mainly either about Glasgow in general or another housing estate: for example, some articles merely noted that Sighthill was to be surveyed by GHA.

The same also applies to discussion of the GoWell project, with relevant articles only mentioning that Sighthill is included in the study. Some neutral articles also discussed Sighthill and Dalmarnock being considered as sites for the athletes' village should Glasgow win its bid for the 2014 Commonwealth Games. It should be noted however that coverage of which site would eventually be picked was also spread across positive and mixed articles, especially once Dalmarnock emerged as the preferred option.

Closure of primary schools and nurseries

In 2009, some neutral articles were published detailing rumours, later confirmed, that Glasgow City Council was going to close 13 primary schools and 12 nurseries in the city. These articles regularly listed the affected schools, which included Sighthill Primary. St Stephen's Primary in Sighthill was also mentioned as the school that pupils from St Aloysius would be transferred to once the latter closed.



CONCLUSION

Over the last decade, newspapers in Glasgow have a relatively negative image of Sighthill. Negative articles about Sighthill outnumber positive articles by about five-to-one. This cumulative effect of negative coverage is perhaps not one that journalists or editors may think about or realise, but it is a fact nonetheless. Glasgow citizens who are regular newspaper readers, and those they talk to, will understand Sighthill as a place with a negative reputation. We are not necessarily arguing that the articles which have been published contain untruths, but rather that they collectively create an image of an area which is detrimental to that place. It is difficult for any community to change the image created of their area through the media. Even if residents have a right-of-reply through the letters pages of a newspaper, this will never redress the balance, given the differences in frequency, space and prominence given to letters of reply compared with the original articles.

Although one could argue that newspaper editors and journalists should be more aware of the balance of coverage they are giving to a community and of the effects this can have over the medium and longer-term, they might reply that they are simply 'telling it as it is'. Thus, one cannot rely upon a turn towards ethical or responsible journalism to change things; rather, those agencies responsible for the regeneration of areas like Sighthill, have to take the media seriously as an additional domain requiring transformation.

In terms of newspaper coverage, the arrival of asylum seekers in Sighthill over the past decade has been detrimental to the reputation of the estate. This is because it has provided the locus for a toxic mix of negative press, combining three elements: violence; racism or social tension; and poor living conditions and

a poor environment. Some of these conditions already existed on the estate, but the introduction/arrival of asylum seekers into Sighthill has provided increased opportunities to talk about them on a regular basis, but with the added ‘spice’ of an immigration angle.

Regeneration itself has mostly resulted in mixed newspaper coverage, either because it allows journalists to rehearse the problems of the estate, or due to challenges and difficulties with the process of regeneration: delays, coping, opposition, lack of information etc. For practitioners, this media focus on the process side of regeneration is a risk since regeneration activity rarely runs to timetable. The economic downturn will have a further impact on regeneration activity and delivery. Nonetheless, better communication about regeneration by GHA and its partners might help avert negative reports to the press and by the press of poor decision-making processes.

However, if we look at the sorts of things that generate positive coverage of the estate – school progress, community events, organisations, facilities, individual achievements in and from the community – we can see that a stronger emphasis on community engagement in regeneration, and on the social regeneration of the community of Sighthill (e.g. to boost community activity and cohesion) could be used to generate a greater number of positive headlines. Thus, it is important that regeneration plans, funding and key developments always have a media strategy accompanying them to try to achieve positive news stories in order to change the balance of coverage of the area. Where regeneration partners have attempted to put across their own account of where the estate is heading, this has achieved positive coverage.

The environment of the estate should improve as regeneration progresses, and this will need to be relayed to the press. Of more concern is the situation regarding crime and violence as this is less under the direct control of regeneration practitioners, yet it clearly needs to be tackled if positive developments are not to be outweighed by continuing negative press about criminality and violence.

To conclude, if Sighthill is to be ‘transformed’ through regeneration, this has to include a serious attempt to change the balance of press coverage of the estate so that its reputation is shifted from a negative to a positive one. Given the evidence about what kinds of things generate positive press coverage, a media and communications strategy could usefully be linked to a firmer strategy for social regeneration, founded on stronger links with community organisations, with schools, and with the police. In the absence of a media arm to the regeneration strategy, there is a danger that negative coverage of the area could continue to dominate the media image of Sighthill.



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