

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 & Clyde.

The title is presented within a large, stylized graphic of two overlapping human silhouettes. The larger silhouette on the left is teal and contains the title text. The smaller silhouette on the right is grey and contains the date. The overall design is clean and modern, using a teal and grey color palette.

**Community
Engagement in
the Initial Planning
of Regeneration
in Glasgow**

May 2009

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

 **INTRODUCTION**

This paper explores community engagement in the initial planning of regeneration in Glasgow. The study it is based on is one element of the Governance, Participation and Empowerment component of the GoWell Research and Learning programme. The paper starts by clarifying what the intended benefits of community engagement in regeneration can be, according to policy theory. It then adds to the evidence base by assessing to what extent these aims are being achieved through community engagement in the latest cycle of area regeneration in Glasgow.

A Framework for Assessing Community Engagement in Regeneration

Community engagement has been central to regeneration policy in the UK in recent years, especially under the New Labour government since 1997. Whilst it is commonly accepted that community engagement is a good thing, others see this policy as one of increasing 'responsibilisation' of communities¹. There are also different interests involved in processes of engagement and participation, with conflicting ideas about how and why engagement should be used at particular stages in any particular policy process^{2,3}.

There are a range of toolkits and guides about 'how to do' community engagement⁴. Given its prominence, however, the evidence about the effects of engagement is not as strong as many believe or assume. A review of the literature on community involvement in Area-based Initiatives concluded that 'mixed impacts are reported' and that the 'benefits cannot be easily quantified or associated causally with particular forms of involvement'⁵. A more positive-themed review of 'the benefits of community engagement' across government programmes also concluded that 'the evidence base in this area is far from solid'⁶.

Based on the available policy and research literature, seven possible aims and associated impacts of community engagement in regeneration have been identified (Table 1):

Table 1: Aims and Impacts of Community Engagement in Area Regeneration: An Assessment Framework

Aim	Criteria
Good Governance	Inclusive and representative participation. Democratic decision-making. Accountability procedures.
Community Empowerment within regeneration	Knowledge of decision-making processes. Greater understanding of context, challenges and processes of change. Influence of the community upon decisions. Community awareness of how to exercise power.
Community Empowerment beyond regeneration	Capacity building within the community. Knowledge and awareness of wider decision-making networks and processes. Confidence and ability of the community to seek change in other arenas and forums.
Sustainable Communities	Regeneration plans containing component elements of sustainable communities as per best practice. Durability of plans and implemented changes. Meeting people's desire to stay together and retain a community.
Cohesive Communities	Enhanced sense of community. Engagement across social groups contributing to social harmony. Acknowledgement of needs and rights of others.
Effective Implementation	Awareness of how plans are to be implemented. Community involvement in implementation phase. Confidence that plans will be realised.
Wellbeing	Personal development, psychological health and physical health of individuals.



STUDY AIM

The aim in this ongoing study is to examine how local communities in Glasgow are involved in the planning and implementation of major regeneration in their areas, and to assess the added value of community engagement in area transformation.

The framework shown in Table 1 is used to guide the analysis. The findings reported here do not specifically address the individual wellbeing aim as this did not form part of this study (although some of our findings may have repercussions for wellbeing).



CONTEXT

Following housing stock transfer in Glasgow in 2003, where Glasgow City Council's (GCC) housing stock of over 80,000 dwellings was sold to the Glasgow Housing Association (GHA), the two partners agreed a strategy of 'transformational change' for eight housing estates across the city. Three of these areas – Red Road, Sighthill and Shawbridge – form the basis of this study.

Central to the regeneration strategy for the city is community engagement, both in accordance with national regeneration policy guidelines (in particular the National Standards for Community Engagement)^{7, 8}, and as required by GHA's own tenant participation strategy and its statements on community engagement in regeneration⁹.

During 2006, GHA, in partnership with local housing organisations (LHOs) appointed teams of consultants to undertake development studies of the areas undergoing transformational regeneration. The consultants recruited residents to work alongside them to form a community group or forum to develop local regeneration plans. Community engagement was identified as a priority for each area.

The research reported here looked at community engagement during this initial planning phase of area regeneration and the community's expectations regarding implementation. A further study of community engagement since this process and during implementation is due to be conducted.



METHODOLOGY

A series of interviews and discussion groups were held between 2006 and 2008 with key informants from the three areas:

- Meetings with consultants in each area (Autumn 2006).
- Discussions with residents who had formed a Community Forum or Development Group in each area: (n=3 discussion groups) (April/May 2007).
- Discussion with a Registered Tenants Organisation in one area (May 2007).
- Focus groups with residents from each area: one comprising adult households and one comprising asylum seekers and refugees: n=6 (Autumn 2007).
- Follow-up meetings with consultants and GHA/LHOs: n=4 (April 2008).

Key documents produced by the three regeneration groups (development plans and baseline studies) and GHA were also examined and informed the analysis.



FINDINGS

The findings are presented using the aims of community engagement (shown in Table 1) as an assessment framework. They are primarily based on the experiences and perceptions of local residents, either because they were involved in the processes of planning regeneration, or they lived in the areas undergoing major regeneration. For this reason the findings do not always necessarily reflect what is indicated in wider strategy and policy documents.

Good Governance

- GHA's approach for the regeneration areas stated that local communities would play a central role in the development studies, including a governance role: "local communities should have the maximum opportunity that is practically possible to be directly involved in, to be consulted and comment on, and influence the decision-making process" ¹⁰. The available documents, that detail the different area approaches, describe the role of the community as to "steer", "guide", be a "sounding board" and to deliver a "vision" for the areas.
- Groups were formed comprising local residents who worked alongside consultants in developing local regeneration plans. They were not formally constituted or elected on behalf of the wider community and they had no formal decision-making powers, so in this sense they had no real power. Although the groups did play a role in the regeneration, in that they had some input, residents themselves were not clear or aware of having a governance role.
- In terms of inclusiveness, the groups differed in their composition and in the types of people represented. This was partly related to the recruitment methods employed but also to the differing contexts and areas. In one area a large group was formed that comprised residents who were not considered the "usual suspects". In another area, that used a similar recruitment method, a different type of group emerged that was much smaller and comprised mainly community activists or people who were already on local committees. The third group was formed from the LHO committee that served the area, so here there was no opportunity for inclusion from the wider community, although the committee itself was comprised of residents.
- Community members worked alongside consultants in developing options for the future regeneration of the areas. As part of the process each community 'chose' a preferred option from a range presented to them, which was then tested with, or endorsed by, the wider community through consultation exercises. However, the focus on the implementation of the preferred option became blurry over time and there was no guarantee that it would be delivered (see Effective Implementation section). Many of the decisions that were being taken were not seen as open and accountable to the community groups concerned. Some members of the groups became sceptical about the decision-making process and felt that ultimately the community would have little influence in making final decisions about the regeneration as these would be taken by other agencies.
- Further information has since been provided from GHA about the purpose of the development studies and the role of the communities involved in them (which was not apparent at the outset). The role of the community was described as to help formulate and develop options that could then be considered and commented on by local strategy groups and the wider community. It was to inform GHA decisions, with GHA making final decisions



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after conducting further work, including market testing, examination of deliverability, and assessing the degree of fit with local and strategic objectives. This would in turn lead to the identification of a further preferred option to be progressed. GHA, however, states that from the start communities were never asked to make final decisions, and that their role within the decision-making process was made clear to them.

- Weaknesses in the process of community engagement as a governance mechanism also arose due to the following factors:
 - o The community was unclear as to the status of their 'preferred option' within broader governance structures and decision-making processes. This may partly have resulted from fluctuating dialogue over time from the various parties involved in the process, but this is hard to tell.
 - o The unelected nature of the community groups who were consulted undermined the status of the 'preferred option' in circumstances where there was no consensus within the community about the outcome.
 - o The masterplans had no status within the planning process, and the local planners were not formally involved in the masterplanning process. Thus, the plans are capable of being substantially revised not just as a result of delivery problems, but also if they were to face opposition from planning officers (this will only become apparent in subsequent stages of the regeneration process).

Community Empowerment

- There was a focus on capacity building in the regeneration process. Consultants and residents worked together in regular meetings to develop plans through sharing information and visiting places to see other examples of regeneration. Most residents reported positive experiences and felt they were valued, listened to and had some input.
- Some groups gained from a raised understanding of what regeneration involves and what can potentially be achieved. In one area some residents were initially cynical and resistant to change: they had concerns about the development of 'yuppie' flats and thought they would be decanted to peripheral estates. The process enabled them to change their views through understanding how the process of regeneration works.
- Whilst the groups mostly felt they had a say, there was an anti-demolition campaign group in one area that did not feel included in the processes of regeneration and thus reported being disempowered. They felt that decisions were being taken for them in an unrepresentative way, and they were suspicious of the motives of organisations such as GHA and the city council. Some members of this group understood the power issues at play and managed to get publicity for their campaign, and the support of locally elected representatives. This is perhaps an example of unintended empowerment .
- When the initial area development studies were complete the majority of the residents who were involved in the process had no further involvement in the regeneration process except



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in a piecemeal way through the LHO. Few appeared to know what the next stages in the process were or what their role was going to be, indicating poor knowledge of power structures and what happens next in the process. This is partly the result of the fact that future delivery mechanisms and decision-making structures for regeneration of all eight Transformation Areas has been ongoing between GHA and its partners for some time. It may be the case that some of the residents who were involved may get opportunities for involvement further down the line as the regeneration progresses.

Sustainable Communities

- The interpretation of a sustainable community and how this would develop - but not necessarily be achieved - was taken at the outset through the design of the studies, and not through the processes of community engagement. The masterplans (Table 2) produced by the consultants, however, reflected the characteristics of each of the areas - and residents had a say in determining what these were – and built on the opportunities available e.g. in one area there was the suggestion of developing a riverside park to maximise the potential of the river running through the area.
- Whilst there are subtle differences based on area specific characteristics, the plans in the three areas are also very similar in that they represent the professional best-practice view of sustainable communities as reflected in the design principles adopted for each exercise. Discerning the community's influence upon these is therefore difficult.
- Future sustainability, in terms of sustained demand for the accommodation provided in an area, was addressed through processes of community engagement and over the planning and design of the new-build recently provided to facilitate the clearance of high rise blocks.
- Whilst sustainable community principles can inform land-use and masterplanning, many of the elements of sustainable communities can only be realised in practice: there is no guarantee that the social reality in the future will reflect 'sustainable communities' in this sense unless ongoing community management also reflects and strives for the same principles.
- Community preferences do not always align with the sustainable communities agenda. Some of the issues raised by communities about the places they live in go against the grain of what is considered the right option in policy terms e.g. wanting a majority of houses for social rent rather than 'mixed tenure'; preferring to keep the high rise flats rather than the redevelopment option that includes low rise housing and new facilities. This raises pertinent issues about the purpose and role of community engagement in this context.



Table 2: Examples of Community Features Contained in Regeneration Plans

Area	Proposed Community Features
Area A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving the passive supervision of the parks and the facilities within the parks A new community hub with improved shopping and community facilities A new community hall A new railway station A new sports complex New play facilities General improvements to the streetscape within the area through planting of fruit bearing trees and creation of home zones
Area B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity for a new health centre Redevelopment of the shopping arcade Traffic calming measures and public realm improvements Creation of one-stop-shop to form the heart of new civic hub Better access to park with new lighting and public realm works Creation of riverside park High quality public square Very sheltered housing Better pedestrian linkages
Area C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant new transport infrastructure Improvements to the public realm New community hub consisting of a new high quality urban square surrounded and activated by local retail, education, community and office use Development of new park providing a focus for leisure, education and recreation uses

Cohesive Communities

- The plans produced through community consultation recognise ‘sense of community’, retaining the ‘established community’ (existing secure tenants) and generating a ‘coherent sense of place’ as important components of the new areas. Community hubs and centres were also indicated as important components in the plans. However, the process for achieving these components, and their contribution to community cohesion, was not made clear in the consultation and masterplanning exercise.
- The wider community expressed concerns about a decline in community cohesion at present. In the past their areas were considered settled and cohesive but they had become more unstable in recent years. However, this perception of community cohesion does not necessarily reflect the reality of living in these places as evidenced by their decline, the poor condition of the stock and related issues such as crime and vandalism. But at the same time, many people report having a connection with the place they live and describe their areas as relatively cohesive. The lack of facilities for young people was also identified as a



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major cause of anti-social behaviour and there were concerns that these problems might continue to exist in the future.

- Regeneration was perceived as a threat to the future cohesion of these neighbourhoods. One issue was in relation to the criteria for new lettings: some people wondered who would live in the new areas and who would be given priority after redevelopment (some residents would have received information about this via the LHO/GHA but they did not seem aware of it and how it would affect them and their community). A related issue was about displacement. Some residents feared being re-housed to areas they did not know, leaving behind friends, neighbours, homes and communities and never getting the chance to return. GHA's approach to this issue has been to try to ensure that sufficient new social housing is built in the areas, and to try to re-house most people in neighbourhoods in the surrounding locality. GoWell will be examining these approaches through its community survey work.
- The focus of community engagement in this process has been upon showing residents how their areas as physical places might look, not how this would be achieved nor how the new community would feel or function. Community engagement had so far concentrated on the concrete plans and not the more important practical and process issues these communities may face, as they are reconstructed with new residents joining established members of the community. It is important to recognise that this is an ongoing process, and that other means of community engagement are taking place in relation to demolition, new build and re-housing, and in other related areas and with other agencies, in parallel.

Effective Implementation

- At the outset, the need for an effective delivery mechanism for regeneration was identified by all consultants. GHA did not itself have the resources to deliver the plans (if and when they were agreed) and needed the support and backing of Glasgow City Council and other partners. Implementation of the plans therefore, in the absence of an effective delivery vehicle, could never be guaranteed. At completion of the masterplanning process (end of 2006) there was still no delivery mechanism in place and little evidence that any agencies had signed up to the principles or to the proposals, and no guarantee that they would be taken forward as a whole.
- The future role of the groups in the process - beyond the Development Studies - was not established or discussed collectively. This issue however relates to the purpose of the studies and the role of the groups within them which was not sufficiently clarified at the outset (see Good Governance section).
- Communities were informed about the plans through local newsletters and given opportunities to view the final proposed plans. Materials were produced by the consultants and LHOs showing how the areas might look in the future, and residents were invited to see these at local events and to feedback their views. Despite this, the wider community showed a lack of awareness of what was being proposed even though there had been several information opportunities made available. Perhaps what is more surprising is that when the groups were asked about the final plans, two were vague (one particularly so) about their content. There was greater awareness from the groups and wider community of the types of houses that were proposed rather than of how the community would look.



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- Some group members expressed their views about the ambitious nature of the plans feeling that they may never become a reality, highlighting the complexities of turning them into something tangible.
- A series of concerns about physical and social problems - including poor living conditions, damp, rubbish, vandalism, things not getting fixed, problems associated with young people etc - in the interim period were identified by the wider community. These areas are still in receipt of investment and it is the responsibility of the LHOs to ensure appropriate levels of estate management are provided, but this was not necessarily apparent to those in this study. Many felt that the focus on regeneration – which could take between 10 and 20 years - was preventing more immediate concerns from being addressed. They were concerned that the slow implementation diverts attention from ongoing problems associated with neglect. There was a lack of awareness about issues such as timescales, who would be given priority in terms of getting the new houses (despite the existence of GHA Allocations Policy), and how regeneration was going to affect people's everyday lives.
- The setting up a Special Purpose Vehicle and relaxation of the terms of the land protocol agreement by the Scottish Government should however now enable the regeneration to progress in a smoother fashion.
- This is an ongoing study and the next stages of our work will continue to research community engagement in the future planning stages and implementation of regeneration in these areas.



CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Seven aims of community engagement were identified from the policy and research literature, specifically in relation to area regeneration (see Table 1). So far, in the three areas studied, community engagement has made contributions to these aims, but some more so than others. There are weaknesses in relation to the aims of community empowerment beyond regeneration, community cohesion and effective implementation in particular.
- Community engagement does not necessarily need to address all these aims, but there should be clarity at the outset about the role and purpose of community engagement in its particular context. This is especially important when community engagement is instigated in a top-down way, and as a way of gaining the trust of communities.
- In order to deliver the aims of community engagement, community engagement processes need to meet the standards of democracy and accountability as well as inclusion. It needs to embrace the whole processes of decision-making, not just a tightly defined stage within community masterplanning, and to clarify these decision-making processes and power structures for communities. In this particular case, the purpose of the community engagement around masterplanning, and the status of the resultant proposals, needed to be much clearer to the communities involved, and agreed with other key partners if possible.



CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Community engagement should deal with regeneration processes as well as components. Our findings suggest that the aim of achieving sustainable communities was interpreted by practitioners predominantly as a question of spatial planning, and not also as a question of community development for the existing or future community. Community development within the city is the responsibility of other agencies rather than being merely a GHA role, yet to date these agencies have not been involved in considering this issue with GHA.
- There is a need for clarity over the extent and limits of agency commitments to the agreed regeneration plans. There was uncertain commitment from the stakeholders with regard to taking the plans forward, and little acknowledgement of their limitations. Perhaps more of the relevant partners should have been involved in the masterplanning processes, and the parameters of the exercise made clearer.
- To date, community governance and management has largely been through the LHOs covering the regeneration areas. In the future LHOs may play a lesser role if, as currently planned, these areas become mixed-tenure communities with fewer homes available for social rent. New or adapted means of community representation may therefore be required.
- Finally, there is the need to maintain continuity in community engagement between planning and implementation: community members involved in developing plans had no sense of any further involvement beyond this. If this does not happen then any gains from community engagement to date may be eroded.



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