

# Sostenga Case Study

## **Community-led urban regeneration on the Redbricks Estate, Hulme, Manchester**

### *Summary*

The case study is about Hulme, a deprived inner-city neighbourhood which has undergone almost complete regeneration at several points. As a result, there have been big changes in the area's demographic profile, and established communities have been 'dispersed'.

One small housing estate in Hulme, the Redbricks, has stood as an island through these wholesale 'clearances' of communities. Wider factors have impacted on the Redbricks estate - whether social problems that persist despite the physical changes, changes in the Hulme's demographic, or the self-help cultures that flourished in the neglected empty spaces following the first unsuccessful regeneration.

The case study describes the community activism in Hulme of the 1970s and 1980s, and how this foundation of Community Development activities has enabled the more recent history of community-led regeneration on the Redbricks.

Particularly since the late 1990s there has been a wide range of informal community activities on the Redbricks. The social landlord, at that time Manchester City Council, largely neglected the estate, though sometimes there was confrontation with residents, fed by both sides. This space allowed resident-led projects to flourish – both through the welcome and participation of residents, and that the Council mostly didn't notice or care.

The study outlines many replicable examples of these projects, identifying what can be achieved, the challenges that may arise, and some of the Community Development lessons learned. These initiatives include a community meal that helped community building and cohesion, a re-use and recycling project addressing deprivation, a community garden and other attempts to address food poverty, a network providing cheap internet access, and a funded project bringing together social and environmental justice that aimed to increase levels of community activism, the Green Zone.

In line with central government policy of selling off all social housing, in 2008 a new landlord took over, City South Manchester Housing Trust. CSM have invested in the physical fabric of the estate and have community engagement policies. A partnership developed around sustainability issues that led to CSM match funding the year-long Green Zone. The skills and knowledge residents gained from over a decade of informal Community Development activities were key to the success of this more formal project, and helped a number of new groups and projects to flourish. The application of the process and values of Community Development that has come from residents has led to different approaches and has allowed the identification of shared local needs and visions and subsequent community action.

However, there are still challenges and problems to be addressed. These are listed along with some of the limitations of the current community and possible solutions.

The example of community-led regeneration on the Redbricks and the use of the Community Development process demonstrates the transformation possible of a neglected deprived area with little hope to a place that residents can be proud of and actively engage in making it a better place. It describes what can be achieved by a community with hope, and how that can be supported and developed by official agencies.