

Manchester case study



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What was the background to the project?

Brunswick (in the ward of Ardwick) is a council-led regeneration area in Manchester and is amongst the top 10% most deprived areas in the UK. The project built on concerns over air quality, raised by residents in a previous ESRC funded collaboration between The University of Manchester and S4B, a housing association. As with many low-income areas, Brunswick is disproportionately affected by poor air quality, and this project sought to work with communities to find inclusive ways of addressing and responding to this.

The project was guided by the following aims:

- to work with communities to identify strategic priorities for air quality.
- to develop and test ways of working with communities to train, offer equipment and support them to address air quality in their area.
- to share learning on community engaged approaches to addressing poor air quality with researchers and policy makers.

Who were the project partners?

The University of Manchester (interdisciplinary team)

S4B is a housing association who are co-ordinating the council-led regeneration of the Brunswick area (they have a community liaison officer who was part funded in the bid)

An artist practitioner with experience of working with The University of Manchester (and a selection of their artist peers)

What did they do?

Community researchers – interview training (offered at different times during the project)

Workshops using air quality monitors

Workshops at an allotment, school and women's group - working with artists, eg screen printing, creative mapping and badge making



A badge made during a project workshop

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What were the key reflections/learning?

The project team identified early in the planning process that they would need to address a sense of distrust from members of the community towards the university. Partnering with an organisation who had strong connections with the area was important, however, it was also vital that the university team were able to physically be in the community, to be seen by residents and to be able to answer their questions about the project and the university's wider involvement.

Similarly, in order to maintain the trust gained through this project, The University of Manchester reflected on the importance of planning to end the project and designing this in from the beginning. In this case study, it was vital to continually share back with the community what had been achieved through the project, whilst also getting the community's input and feedback on being involved. This ensured that the community were aware of all the different aspects of the project that were happening in unison.

Being able to reach out to existing networks was key to the success of this project. The University of Manchester reflected on how it was also important not just to find one community partner and depend on them to engage across the area, but rather to explore the various networks that exist within communities and to identify *'anchor people who oscillate between these networks and how you can connect with them'*. By engaging these individuals, the project was able to have a much broader reach.

A key piece of learning carried forward by the Manchester university team was that trying to reach out across the whole community was difficult, and that it worked better to build stronger relationships with specific groups where you can have more impact and trust that the impact will 'cascade out'. The University of Manchester reflected on how people from the women's group they engaged with were also involved and shared the project with the allotment society and toddler group.

The project reflection meetings provided a valuable space for the university research team to reflect on what they were learning and to adapt the project in response to what was happening in their engagement with the community. The community liaison officer played an important role of feeding into these meetings.



*Prints created by
Year 6 pupils*

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What were the outcomes?

This project generated a range of outcomes at community, policy and university scales.

Through the workshops, participants created a range of screen-printed art works, which have been exhibited in the community.

Members of the community attended training in how to use air quality monitors to develop a better understanding of what is happening in their local area.

The community were involved in imagining what would need to change to improve air quality in the area, which has led on to an additional partnership with Manchester City Council, S4B, and the wider Brunswick community, to carry out a targeting study of the specific barriers to active travel in the ward. The partnership is seeking funding to continue to transform this learning into action.

Through this funding programme, The University of Manchester has developed a strong place connection, getting to know the different partners in the area and being able to think strategically about how to develop these relationships going forward.

In addition, the university have started engaging with a different area in Manchester, to integrate the learning from the EPPE project into a re-generation project before the project begins. This links in with the university's current work on their civic agreement, ensuring they are rooting their civic focus within the context of their local area.

Additionally, the learning around how to best work in partnership with communities to address poor air quality has informed future projects in other areas of Manchester.

Finally, this project led to the creation of a number of policy advice documents. This includes one on how you should work with communities, which has since been picked up and raised as a question in parliament.

