

# Building Sustainable Communities

During the summer months of 2008 17 women from across South Yorkshire attended a bridging course delivered by staff at Sheffield Hallam University, designed to provide an insight into sustainable community development. During the seven weeks the women conducted a 'place check' or community audit, visited a number of housing and environmental projects, and came up with their own regeneration plan. They also built a portfolio to demonstrate their learning and progression throughout the course.

This new initiative, funded by Higher Futures, is a collaborative venture between Planning, Regeneration and Housing and the Women in Science, Engineering and Technology team (part of the Centre for Science Education at SHU). Its aim is to help the students recognise and build on their existing skills and experience, provide a taste of university life, and encourage them to further their careers in sustainable community development.

Many of the students were able to build on the experience to further their careers, and one progressed onto the new Foundation Degree in Sustainable Communities.



Many of the women were already actively involved in voluntary and community groups, in paid and unpaid capacities, and all were keen to hone their skills and knowledge.

In the final evaluation one student commented:

“The course has opened my eyes to all the opportunities available in regeneration; I realise that I have a lot of transferable skills that would help me get a job in the sector”.

With the aid of Higher Futures funding, the women did not have to pay any tuition fees or childcare, and were able to experience student life at first hand. For many, this was their first taste of Higher Education, and they all had the opportunity to gain ten credits at level 4.

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