Welcome to Sheffield Hallam University and to this professional development workshop organised by the Urban and Regional Studies group in the Faculty of Development and Society.

This event is part of an annual programme of workshops on the theme of ‘People and Places’ organised by SHU to provide opportunities for continuing professional development and the sharing of good practice in the regeneration and sustainable communities sectors. We hope the day will provide an opportunity to highlight latest policy developments and practical experience from our speakers this morning and that the workshops this afternoon will be a useful opportunity to share your experiences and to help future thinking about urban design. Urban design is concerned with the creation of places that enable a consistent and logical flow of urban space, accessibility, public activity, multiple usages, civic character, local distinctiveness, environmental responsibility, and, ultimately, sustainable communities. Contemporary challenges include making places for people in ways that are inclusive and sustainable to both the urban fabric and the individuals and communities affected. Access to a well designed, well planned and well managed environment is essential to people’s health and well-being.

Design is now fundamental to regeneration and place-making - particularly since national policy and local planning requires practitioners to consider design as a key feature of their activity. Professional skills in urban design are central to the sectors responsible for planning, designing and managing cities and towns. A skills gap in this field has been identified and professional development for those involved as urbanists needs to address a number of key themes including defining the key principles of design and exploring the economic and social value of incorporating high quality design as a feature of sustainable investment in local communities.

The speakers today explore some of the contemporary challenges of making design an effective part of regeneration schemes in more detail - providing the evidence that strategic approaches to sustainable development need to consider how the wider benefits of design meet environmental sustainability objectives. We also hear from practitioners and academics who have established their own approaches to design with an emphasis on the ways in which communities can be involved in influencing their local environment. The workshops will consider how some of the barriers to the delivery of high quality design can be overcome and how community aspirations and urban design principles can be reconciled.
The intention of all our professional workshops is to allow you the opportunity to learn from each other and to share your expertise - and this afternoon’s workshops also provide an opportunity to explore some of your main questions around this issue. I hope you find the day both productive and enjoyable.

If you would like further information about any of our other professional development opportunities, please contact Kim Haigh, our Research and Training Adviser (telephone: 0114 2254653, or email: k.haigh@shu.ac.uk).