

## **File: Naseem Kahn 3**

If I think about Arnold Circus, when I first moved in, about 1999/2000, it was a rounded little hill in the middle of a road and on the top there was a bandstand and it was overgrown, it was dirty, it was menacing and local people said, 'Oh no, we never go up there, because it's for drug dealers, prostitutes, you find needles there, you find condoms there,' and we spoke to the police at one point and they said, 'Oh, we think it should be pulled down.' On Calvin Avenue there's a delicatessen called Lila's. Lila herself, she was saying how beautiful it could be. All it needed was a little bit of TLC. And I said, 'Well the school is just next-door. Why not involve the school?' We cut back the vegetation, we organised for the children to plant wild flowers. We created the Friends of Arnold Circus, which then became a charity. Then we had a sharing picnic where we raised the money, which is jolly difficult I can tell you, to close off the street and we got in touch with Spitalfields Farm and asked them to bring a donkey and cart. And so we said to everybody, 'Bring food and share.' So it was very much from ground up. The fact that it now looks so beautiful, people are now very happy to go up there. Trainers use it, dog walkers use it, the Pavilion Brass Band have a strong connection with it, and I believe the leader actually proposed to one of the members of his band on Arnold Circus. So it's now become integrated into the life of the community.

**<End of transcript>**