

# The 'Community' Research Exercise

This exercise is designed to encourage your church to find out as much as they can about their local community.

It is intended that you involve as many of your congregation as a possible in the process of data collection. It doesn't matter if they survey their neighbours, friends, work colleagues, or people in the street. In fact a combination of these would be great.

The advantage of the exercise is that in the execution of it, the church will already have begun to engage with its local community.

If you are hoping to apply for future funding from outside agencies it will be advantageous if you can make this research as comprehensive and inclusive as possible. Your conclusions will carry greater weight if you are able to say, for example, 80% of the population responded and these were the conclusions.

Anyone can be involved in the data collection, but you will need to identify a specific group to do the data collation. They need to be reasonably academic and able to interpret data. It maybe that you consider employing a professional researcher to do this work for you; enquire at your local university.

## The Aim

To discover all you can about your community from those who work/live in it and who are outside the church.

## You can do this by:

- Visiting the local council offices and looking at strategic plans for your area.
- Exploring the Index of Deprivation and see what areas of your community figure within it and what issues are identified as a problem.
- Examining the OFSTED/Estin reports for your local schools, looking for patterns, common themes, areas where you might be able to help.
- Look at the National Statistics Office website and identify the data for your area. (How to do this is included on the NSO website.)
- Survey people in a local community 'hot spot', such as a supermarket car park.  
You can ask, for example:
  - What are the good things about living in this area?
  - What are the needs of the community? What would you say are the top three needs in this area?
  - What do you think should be done to meet those needs?

Keep the questions simple and neutral. Don't ask too many. Don't lead. Don't ask what the church should be doing because most people either won't know or will assume that church only does religious things.