



Community Survey

A community survey or community consultation involves talking with and listening to people who work for local organisations in order to identify local issues and priorities.

It can be useful to start this process with a neighbourhood mapping exercise (see separate activity), which can help pinpoint these local organisations.

Guidance:

Step 1: Preparation

Read through the activity and work out how to share the steps in the process with your group, particularly the information about safety and confidentiality.

Step 2: Planning

Bring the group together to plan their priorities for the consultation, identify the organisations they want to talk to and think about the questions they would like to ask.

To set the scene, go through the advantages and disadvantages of guided conversations (see Sheet 3 of this activity pack).

Identifying organisations:

Work with the whole group to create a list of organisations that people would like to include in their consultation. Using this list, decide who will contact and visit each organisation.

Questions to consider

- Can you visit all the organisations you have listed, or will you need to do some sampling? How will you decide which ones to put in the sample? Will there be one of each type, so that a range is covered?
- Where there are already some existing links between the church and community organisations, should you include visits to these to strengthen the links?
- Are there community groups that are likely to become partners with you in the future, and should these be included on your list?
- Are there areas of the parish where the church has very little contact? If so, should you target some of your visits in these areas?



Community Survey (continued)

Step 2: Planning (continued)

Planning the interviews/conversations:

The group will then need to talk about how they plan to conduct these interviews. In making these plans, the group might find it helpful to go through these questions:

1. How can we explain what we are doing and why we are doing it in a way that is easy for people to understand and would make them feel comfortable? (Encourage the group to come up with an agreed introduction.)
2. How should we conduct these interviews in a way that gains people's trust and helps to build positive relationships? (Remind the group of the safety and confidentiality considerations (Activity Sheet 4) with the group.)
3. What information do we want to gather about those organisations and so what questions do we need to ask people? (Encourage the group to use the sample survey as a template list of questions, but to see whether there are any other things they would like to ask.)
4. How will we record the information we collect, during and after the interviews? (Again, encourage the group to use the survey template record form, but see if they would like to record information in a different way.)

Step 3: Reflection and next steps

1. In what ways were the organisations you visited contributing to your vision of a flourishing neighbourhood?
2. What did you find that was positive and needs to be celebrated?
3. What did you find that was fragile and that the church might be able to help to address?
4. How was the church perceived by the representatives of the organisations you spoke to?
5. What can be celebrated about how the church is perceived?
6. What was difficult or painful to hear and why?
7. Are there things that can be learned from this which might be useful in the future?



Community Survey (continued)

Guided Conversations – Advantages and Disadvantages:

Advantages:

- Relationships and trust are easier to establish, and barriers of culture easier to overcome.
- You have a chance to allay suspicion and explain why you are doing the profiling.
- Community groups can feel valued because the Church has taken the trouble to make a personal visit and to listen.
- Promises of confidentiality can be agreed and trust established.
- Feelings can be expressed and understanding shared, and a better picture can be achieved because of this.
- This method can produce very helpful views and a real openness to working with the church.

Disadvantages:

- It needs plenty of careful preparation.
- Visits take time, for you and for the people you meet.
- It is not so easy to weigh up the views and feelings that come up in conversation as it is with written answers.
- You can lose the sense of direction if there is no 'shape' to guide the conversation.
- If trust is difficult to achieve, the conversation may be 'guarded' and honest opinions may not be shared.
- There is no anonymity to protect the person who is visited.
- This method relies on the visitor being fair minded and able to enter into the other person's frame of reference. Your prejudices may weaken your understanding of what the other person says.



Community Survey (continued)

Safety and confidentiality considerations

In preparing to talk to people in your local community you will need to consider **how you communicate what you are doing** and how you might answer any questions about it that people may have.

In a group consider the following questions and agree some principles together:

1. How will you explain what you are doing and what the information will be used for?
2. Think through what questions your explanation provokes and how you might respond to them.
3. How will you approach personal safety and confidentiality? e.g. work in pairs not alone, let someone know where you're going, respect people's privacy, don't collect personal information etc.