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## UNDERTAKING A COMMUNITY AUDIT AND CONSULTING WITH THE COMMUNITY

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### TEAM PRAYER

Loving Father, we thank you for your gifts of love and grace. Teach us to see Jesus in the people we encounter, and to respond with loving, generous and open hearts. Lord we pray for words of warmth and comfort, for wisdom in silence and wisdom in noise, for mutual respect and kindness.  
In your name we pray, Amen



“Church Buildings should never be silent mausoleums, but always vibrant centres of service at the heart of their local communities.”

The Rt Revd Dr John Inge, The Bishop of Worcester,  
*Assets not Burdens: using church property to  
accelerate mission* (The Centre for Theology  
and Community, January 2017)



“The picture is far from hopeless. There is a rising wave of imaginative adaptation of church buildings for community use which has breathed new life into them. The examples are myriad and should serve as an inspiration.”

Report of the Church Buildings Review Group  
(Church of England, October 2015)  
[www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/news/launch-major-new-report-how-church-england-manages-its-16000-church](http://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/news/launch-major-new-report-how-church-england-manages-its-16000-church)

**The basic aim of most projects is likely to be that more people use the building and benefit from so doing. So you need to find out exactly what your local community wants from its church. This is your opportunity to create a plan of action led by the local community. Bear in mind, the result of a consultation may mean that you have to change your original ideas.**

## IDENTIFYING THE NEED

For your project to be successful, you want to ensure that it is answering a real need within your community. This stage is about doing the research to identify that need and gathering the evidence grant funders will be looking for when assessing your application. You need to demonstrate your case i.e. that your church project will make a difference to the lives of the people in your community.

Remember that the idea one community has for its local church may differ from that of an adjacent community for their church. What works in one community may not work in another.

## CASE STUDY

# ST MARGARET'S CHURCH, WARD END, DIOCESE OF BIRMINGHAM, COFE

[www.stmargaretscommunitytrust.co.uk](http://www.stmargaretscommunitytrust.co.uk)

[www.theunityhubb.co.uk](http://www.theunityhubb.co.uk)

**St Margaret's Church, Grade II, whose beginnings date back to 1516 when permission was first sought to erect a chapel of ease, closed for public worship in 2005. The St Margaret's Community Trust was set up 'to refurbish, redevelop and extend' the old St Margaret's Church to create a multi-purpose community centre and to provide care and support for the people living in Ward End, Birmingham.**

On 21st September 2014, the church was rededicated by the Bishop of Birmingham and there is now a communion service on the 1st Sunday of the month and Café Church on the 3rd Sunday of every month.

At the same, the Unity Hubb organisation, based in the church, offers projects and services to the local multi-ethnic community including creative workshops for local women, dance workshops for local young people, and community-based play activities. It also houses the area's local food bank.

Officially launched in May 2015 at an event that attracted over 500 visitors, the Unity Hubb has hosted a number of big events including the Heritage Fun Day on May 3, 2016 which also attracted over 500 guests.

In April 2016 a 'Women in Conversation' evening was held to celebrate cultural diversity in the area and in July 2016, the Trust launched its efforts to attract local schools to visit the church and learn about its heritage as it is home to a great collection of

Heritage monuments and artefacts. With help from funders, the monuments have been fully restored and there are regular tours of the building along with state-of-the-art digital tour information on offer.

The refurbished venue is also available for public hire; with facilities that include a main hall, a meeting room and a hot desking area.

The church holds regular Heritage Drop-In sessions on Tuesdays from 11am - 1pm and a Heritage Open Day on the last Thursday of each month – with the added bonus of home-made cake.

Over the years, St Margaret's Community Trust has held a number of initiatives and events in partnership with local organisations such as Birmingham City Council including a community cohesion sea side trip, a tree dressing project and a joint Eid and Christmas celebration.

## CASE STUDY

### ST MICHAEL, FLORDON, DIOCESE OF NORWICH, COFE

[www.achurchnearyou.com/flordon-st-michael](http://www.achurchnearyou.com/flordon-st-michael) // [www.flordonvillage.org](http://www.flordonvillage.org)

Population: 281 (2011 Census)

**The Flordon Community Centre, which hosts a number of popular community events including a jumble sale, musical comedy gigs and a movie night - Views from the Pews - is based inside the St Michael's Church.**

It was decided to adapt the church for community use and provide a welcoming venue in Flordon, a small village with roughly 300 residents situated about 13km south of Norwich. There was no other public building in Flordon that could be used as a community meeting place since a private hall much used by the village was closed 4 years before. Without a place to meet there would be nowhere to hold village events with a resulting loss of community spirit.

In 2006 a questionnaire was sent to all 117 households of which 80 responded (68%). 70 households were in favour, 64 would support fund-raising activities and 62 said they would make use of the facilities proposed.

The Project Team was made up of parish and church councillors and Flordon Community Group members. Early on, they decided against erecting a village hall as there was no obvious

site and it would mean having to maintain two buildings. The church is located in the centre of the village close to social housing and with a green space around it, a perfect location for a hall to improve social cohesion within the village.

The church itself was in need of repair and in danger of closing due to its small congregation. The project started in 2005 with Phase one of repairing the roof and walls which cost £117,000 and was completed in 2009. The second phase was to convert the inside. Some of the initial ideas had to be scaled back owing to difficulty in raising sufficient funds. The work comprised: underpinning and repairing the vestry and converting it to a disabled-friendly lavatory; removing the pews and purchasing tables and chairs (that raised a few eyebrows); replacing the floor bricks with an oak floor; re-laying the porch floor to obtain no-step access; constructing a kitchenette at the back of the church; providing new heating; and decorating throughout. The Jacobean pulpit and nave were left undisturbed. This cost £90,000. In total the project has taken eight years to bring to fruition. Norfolk ProHelp whose members

provided pro-bono assistance in areas of legal advice, buildings advice and publicity was crucial to the success of this project.

St Michael's Community Centre was opened in July 2013. The PCC is the landlord and the St Michael's Flordon Trust, the tenant. The Trust is composed of parish councillors, church members and Flordon Community Group members. Under the lease, the Trust will be permitted to use the entrance porch, nave and rebuilt vestry. The chancel is reserved solely for worship.

Food and drink is prepared and served in the kitchenette at the west end of the nave and a hearing loop was also installed, funded by the Snelling Trust. Comfortable chairs have been sponsored by parishioners and people with family links to the village subscribing £4,000 and the Centre/church also offers plenty of parking. The community centre is available for hire and is well utilised by the community.

The church holds three services each month – including on the first Sunday when the congregation enjoys a 'shared breakfast and then a simple short act of worship.

## COMMUNITY AUDIT - A SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROFILE

A Community Audit explores the reality of the geographical church parish, and identifies the local demographic so that you can compile a profile of your community/neighbourhood. Once this has been established, there is the opportunity to further explore how the church and its proposed project can better serve its congregation and community.

You can use the 2011 Census data as your starting point. ([www.ons.gov.uk](http://www.ons.gov.uk))

You want to build up a picture of your local community which will answer the following questions:

- Is the local population one of young families, older people, or mature couples?
- Is it an area of high unemployment? Or is it a mix of professionals and people working in low-skilled local jobs.
- Is it situated in the commuter belt?
- Who is around during the daytime?
- What type of housing is there and is there enough affordable housing?

## WHERE TO FIND INFORMATION ON LOCAL DEMOGRAPHICS

The **Church of England National Statistics Department** has collated national census statistics by parish, these are called 'Parish Spotlights' and are available from every diocesan office. These provide data on individual parish attendance, electoral rolls, and deprivation data.

[www.churchofengland.org/about-us/facts-stats/research-statistics.aspx](http://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/facts-stats/research-statistics.aspx)

Other denominations may have similar statistics.

The **Church Urban Fund** offers a Look Up Tool which enables you to find out more about the level of poverty in your parish and how this compares with other parishes locally and nationally.

[www2.cuf.org.uk/lookup-tool](http://www2.cuf.org.uk/lookup-tool)

Otherwise you can contact your **Local Authority Research Team**. They can provide local statistics about your community, obtained from sources like the census.

**Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2015** gives Government statistics on deprivation. These can be hard to interpret and it is this data which is used to compile the 'Parish Spotlights'. In rural communities, a higher deprivation score is often based on factors such as a lack of access to services like public transport or affordable housing.

[www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2015](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2015)



It can be helpful to study a map of the area and identify your physical relationship to housing, other community spaces and other charities and community groups undertaking outreach work.

Other **baseline data** you need to collect concerns local organisations and amenities. The more information you collect, the better. The following areas are relevant:



### What does the community already have?

There may already be a lot of positive things happening. List the facilities that your community already has such as the faith buildings, schools, a pub, a post office, shops, business services, a café, village/community hall. What healthcare provision is accessible? What is the level of public transport? Is there a strong sense of community?

### What services are currently provided?

What local services are provided e.g. library, bank, shop, post office? Does the community have regular mobile services e.g. library, bank, shop? Identify community activities that currently take place. Does your neighbourhood offer youth activities? How often? For which age group? Do other community groups meet regularly, if so where? Is there provision for mothers and toddlers? Are there activities for older people? What about their carers? What other community buildings are there? Are they fully used or under-utilised? What activities can the youth or older people get involved in? What activities and special interest events such as music and arts take place already?

### What services are missing

Identify the services that the community would like to see. Would people like to see a small crèche operating five mornings a week? Could existing neighbourhood groups do more with better meeting facilities? Has the closure of a shop facility left car-less people with no access to shopping facilities? What would make life easier or more enjoyable for people in your local community?

### Local development plans

Are you aware of plans for new housing in your area? What about other changes e.g. removal of local bus services? What new needs will this create? Who will be affected?

You can gather a lot of this information yourselves and perhaps start to come up with some ideas about how you and your building can help with some of these issues.

Ask your local authority for any Local Action Plans and Strategic Plans for your area.

## CASE STUDY

### ALL SAINTS CHURCH, WOLVERHAMPTON , DIOCESE OF LICHFIELD, COFE

[www.wolvescentralparish.com/all-saints](http://www.wolvescentralparish.com/all-saints) // [www.facebook.com/allsaintswv2](https://www.facebook.com/allsaintswv2)

Population: 249,470 (2011 Census)

**Built in 1879, the unlisted All Saints Church, is situated in a deprived area of Wolverhampton and was initially founded to respond to the needs of sex workers in the nineteenth century. And it fulfils the same function today as part of its mission as its Warm Welcome programme offers a safe place where sex workers can meet with specialist agencies for advice on drugs, sexual health and housing at a drop-in night each week. It's also a chance to open up other opportunities for them and treat them and their issues with sensitivity.**

The *Warm Welcome* drop-in for sex workers began on 1 July 2014. Volunteers and professionals from many support services attend the Warm Welcome.

And it helps that as a venue the church was adapted in the 1980s when the nave was partitioned off into a community centre, leaving a small worship space and two vestries to be used by the church.

In 2017, with a grant from the Church Urban Fund, a small kitchenette with a dishwasher and microwave further improved the facilities on offer and hot drinks and meals are available at the drop-in sessions. There's also a sofa and a dining table which adds to the welcoming environment.

The building and facilities are also used by other groups which include Changing Lives, which runs training courses for women; a parents' support group; the Probation service; a gardening group; and a monthly shared meal is also on offer.

This initiative came fourth in the Marsh Awards for Innovative Church Projects 2017 run in partnership with the National Churches Trust.

Reverend Sarah Schofield, team vicar at All Saints Church said: *"The church is in the middle of the city's red light district. We are the only place in the local community where something like this is organised. We throw open our doors and offer support and well as going out on the streets with hot drinks to invite women in.*

*We want to be a reliable, safe and loving place for women, it is important to honour our promise and it has a real impact on the whole church here".*

However, before any of these ideas are taken forward you need to collect the views of the community.



The Diocese of Lichfield has produced advice on undertaking community surveys [www.lichfield.anglican.org/documents/community-surveys](http://www.lichfield.anglican.org/documents/community-surveys)

## CONSULTING/ENGAGING WITH THE WIDER COMMUNITY

You want to find out:-

- i) **What do local people think of the existing services?** The majority of people may be happy with existing services, but feel a new service is required to meet a new need. Perhaps an existing service meets the needs of those it can help, but should be expanded to help more people. Ask them what they like about living in the area? Ask them who misses out in the area? What services are lacking?
- ii) **What ideas do local people have?** Everybody has an opinion on most things so find out what it is. If your community has a problem, ask them what the solution is. Some people's suggestions will be more appropriate than others, other people may come up with an idea you hadn't thought of, but somewhere within all those ideas may be the perfect solution to your community's problem/s. It will result in a more robust, viable and supported project.

## TALKING TO PEOPLE

There are various ways in which you can get people's views and comments and the method you choose will depend upon the size of your community.

Think about how you want to present yourself and how you want to tell people about what you are asking of them. Where possible the face-to-face personal touch is always best even if you start by sending round a questionnaire.

Here are a few suggestions for you to choose from:

- **Questionnaires.** You can deliver one to every household or business to ensure that everyone gets an opportunity to have their say. For this to work, you need to give people enough time to think about your questions, and make it easy to return their responses. Either quote a local address or set up a collection point in your community. Ask open questions. These are the ones that begin with *What, Where, Why, When, How* and *Who*? This encourages people to offer their own view. Avoid *leading* questions. *Wouldn't it be good if we could have our own neighbourhood library* prevents people from putting forward their own ideas. Don't make the questionnaire too long. Offering a small incentive (e.g. entering all completed questionnaires into a draw to win a £20 M&S voucher) can help maximise the response.

You can find two sample surveys on the **Parish Resources** website which you can adapt or add questions to as appropriate. (Fundraising Guide 5 [www.parishresources.org.uk/resources-for-treasurers/funding/funding-guides-capital-fundraising](http://www.parishresources.org.uk/resources-for-treasurers/funding/funding-guides-capital-fundraising) )



If you are an urban church, a community survey might not be the most effective way of engaging with the community's wants and needs particularly in inner-city areas with highly transient populations. Most churches know their community context, and therefore will be able to adopt a consultation process that has been effective in the past.

- **Chat to people.** Instead of getting people to fill in a form, why not fill it in for them as you chat to them? Ask if you can chat to people in your local health centre, estate community centre, doctor's waiting room or pub, and ask for their thoughts and opinions. Again, don't bombard them with too many questions, and make sure they're open questions.
- **Publicity.** Hand out A5 flyers or leaflets in the street. Put up posters and flyers in local shops. Ask for help from local stakeholders and charities that can help with project communications. Give details of how people can get involved and provide feedback.
- **Suggestion boxes.** Set up boxes in popular places in your community for people to put their own suggestions. This is a good way of encouraging people to put forward their own ideas.

- **Community Days, Fetes, or Festivals.** Have a stall at an existing community event and use it as opportunity to talk to people. You might need something like a competition or things for sale to draw people to your stall.
- **Organise your own community event in the church itself.** This can be very worthwhile as it may encourage people who have never been into your church building before to 'cross your threshold'. Organise an open day or a fun day of events: serve quality refreshments; have a small exhibition; organise a fun activity e.g. practical workshops, making Christmas decorations. Include activities for children as that will encourage families to come along.  
  
Invite all the local groups such the Women's Institute, drama societies, local schools, music groups, the Local History Society and the Art Society.

Include tours of the church building and activities for children. If your visitors learn about the history of the church and its stories, it will help them to engage with the living history of the building.

Alongside asking them about their community and needs, ask them what they think about the building. Do they find it welcoming? Is it comfortable? Does it explain itself? What would they like to see happen here?

(Remember not everyone will want to speak out in front of others so provide paper and pens for people to write down their thoughts.)

However you consult, make sure that you talk to as many people as possible. The more people who get an opportunity to express their views and opinions, the better it will be.

**Consultation also gives people a voice and buy-in from an early stage.**

## CASE STUDY

### ST. LEONARDS, YARPOLE, DIOCESE OF HEREFORD, COFE

The church website is at: [www.yarpole.com](http://www.yarpole.com)

The shop website is at: [www.yarpole.com/index.php/yarpole-community-shop](http://www.yarpole.com/index.php/yarpole-community-shop)

Population: 700 (2011 Census)

**St Leonard's, Grade II\*, is at the centre of a small rural village which is very much off the beaten track.**

The 2005 **parish plan** identified two issues, first that the shop which had closed in 2004, was central to the community and secondly that the church was underused. The community, determined to hold on to their community run shop and post office, worked with the church to secure a permanent home at the west end of the church.

An exhibition of the proposals was put up in church as a way of getting people used to the idea of using it for secular use. A very carefully structured questionnaire, overseen by the County Council, asking people what they would like to use the church for, was sent to every household. A third responded of which 85% were broadly in favour of extended community use.

An extensive programme of re-ordering was undertaken and now St Leonard's provides premises for the shop, post office, café, flexible community space and numerous community activities. The Victorian side aisle houses the toilets and vestry.

Raising the £240k required and obtaining the necessary permissions proved the two most challenging aspects.

The Yarpole Community Shop Association Ltd was set up in 2005, as an Industrial and Provident Society (IPS). The shop is a stand-alone business and independent of the PCC.

A Community Shares Scheme was set up to help fund the shop. Shares were bought by 236 members for £10 each. These shares are still valid and the number of shareholders has grown to 322.

This is a project where there has been a lot of thought around the sharing of sacred and community space. Initial thoughts that a division should be created between the secular space and the sacred place have evolved into thinking about how the 'sacred space' can be integrated into a cohesive whole with the nave.

St Leonards Building Management Group (BMG) (the inclusive management committee which represents all the users – the shop, the café etc.) has taken full responsibility for all aspects of running the building. The BMG is a sub-committee of the PCC. They also currently manage the café through a part-time manager who reports to the BMG, but that too ultimately could become a separate entity along with whatever else is developed on behalf of the community.

The project took nearly 5 years and on 1st October 2009, Yarpole Village Shop became the first full time community shop to operate within a church. It is open 7 days a week and much of the day-to-day work is carried out by 45 unpaid volunteers.

## OTHER GROUPS YOU SHOULD CONSULT WITH

### Your own parish council/town council

It is important to talk to and present your ideas to your parish/town council, firstly so they are fully aware of your project and secondly, if asked, they will be able to offer support to you when you need it, for example in a letter of support to a funder. Try to make the time to formally present to the Parish Council at one of their meetings.

Local Authority and Primary Care Trusts are useful people to talk too, as they will know about some of the key issues in your community. They may be looking for a location for a specific service or might like to be a partner in your project.

### Current community users of your church

If community groups already use your church, then ask them how they find it and what could be improved e.g. the facilities, lighting, heating, access, storage space etc. It is also useful to ask local funeral directors as they will have a view on use of space and use of entrances.

### Other local groups and organisations

It is essential that you make contact with and talk to existing groups in your area, for example the local Women's Institute, the Scouts and Guides, the Young Farmers, youth groups, pensioners clubs, parent and

toddler groups, U3A, environmental groups and amenity and other civic groups. Don't forget some of the smaller activity groups as they may have needs that are not currently being met and this will also avoid duplication if they are already providing a service. And don't forget to include the local schools as they may be looking for premises for some of their activities.

### Local services

Local services such as hospitals, the job centre, the police, schools and Age UK often have an insight into the needs their community is currently facing. You can ask service users and groups to help collect feedback on the project.

Make contact with community leaders and the organisations in your area that work with key groups such as children, the elderly, the disabled, their carers and other disadvantaged vulnerable groups. They may be local charities or the local branches of national organisations. They will have insight into the local communities and those most in need. They will be able to tell you what issues they are trying to tackle and have ideas for services which the church could provide or host. They may also offer opportunities for partnership.

For example, do you want to run a lunch club for retired housebound people in your community? In which case, can you link up with the local Age UK group? Perhaps a little support from your group will mean they can extend an **existing service** that they offer.

### Organisations that own the other community buildings in your area

Find out if their community buildings are under-used or full to capacity and having to turn bookings away and if so for what and at what times? Identify what they offer and in what ways you can complement their services rather than competing.

### Other faith groups

Other faith groups may also be looking at community outreach which could create opportunities for partnerships.

### Local businesses

Make links with local businesses e.g. shops, tea shops, pubs, potteries, craft shops.

Talk to other heritage attractions or sites and amenities that draw visitors to find out who visits the area and why?

**Don't duplicate and don't try to compete with existing activities – that's a waste of resources. Reach out and work with other groups, rather than working in isolation.**

## COMMUNITY LED PLANNING (ALSO KNOWN AS PARISH PLANNING.)

**Community-led plans** (Parish Plans) provide a process for local people who want to produce a holistic plan that will improve the wellbeing and sustainability of their neighbourhood. It is a way for a community to work together to decide what is important to them and what kind of changes they want for their community. It helps a community identify key issues and needs. The Town or Parish Council usually leads this consultation exercise in partnership with local groups and organisations.

Getting involved with the development of a local plan can be a useful tool in addressing the wider strategy for community ministry. **If you are involved, then the church will be included.** As part of the process existing facilities will be identified as well as local needs and possible solutions and it may be that your church can be part of that solution either by providing a venue, volunteers and/or working in partnership with another organisation to provide a service etc. Remember, the church building is a huge resource for many communities, and taking an active part in parish or community-led planning can mean that you are rightly recognised as being part of a community and may be seen as a solution to any issues that arise. It was once said that many parish churches are on the outside picture of a parish plan, but not many were to be found on the inside pages.

You can also make use of **Planning for Real**<sup>®</sup> (PFR) which is a nationally recognised community planning process based on a 3D model. The process allows residents to register their views on a range of issues, to work together to identify priorities and to go on to develop an action plan for change in partnership with local agencies. They will also provide training and project delivery support so that communities can use Planning for Real<sup>®</sup> and other techniques to develop and run programmes of community-led engagement. The ethos underpinning all their methods is that they are highly visual, tactile, participatory and community-led. This means it is a good way of involving a whole range of people including children and those not used to reading plans or thinking about community development.

[www.planningforreal.org.uk](http://www.planningforreal.org.uk)

If there is no local plan and no enthusiasm in the local community to develop one, then you can rely on undertaking a community consultation as outlined above. Of course, you could as a church take the lead role in initiating the idea of undertaking a community plan. If there is already a plan, and your church is not included, then look to see what needs were identified and see if your church can offer a solution.

### Local Development Plans

Local Development Plans (LDPs) provide the vision for how communities will grow and develop in the future. The intention is that they provide certainty for communities and investors alike about where development should take place and where it should not and what supporting infrastructure is required for growth. The Government's aim is for every area in England to have a local plan. It will show where new housing is planned and therefore, where you may be able to identify the needs of new people and how you can meet them. Developments may also have money for community projects attached via the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) formerly known as S106 funding.

## THE LOCALISM ACT

Introduced in 2011, this Act became a key piece of legislation. It is a radical shift of power from central government to local communities and the intention is that it will devolve greater powers to local councils and neighbourhoods and give local communities more control over local decisions.

There are two elements to the Act which could have direct relevance to churches undertaking community outreach:

**The Right to Plan:** Neighbourhood Plans are intended to become the new building blocks of the planning system where communities have the power to grant planning permission if a local majority are in favour. The process for developing Neighbourhood Plans will rely on active community involvement. Communities are able to draw up Neighbourhood Plans for their area and use these to pass planning applications by local referendum, provided their decision aligns with national planning requirements.

**Community Right to Challenge:** voluntary and community groups, parish councils and local authority staff are able to challenge to take over the running of local public services. A community group can express an interest in running a local service and submit a supported petition to show that they would be able to provide a better service or facility. If the proposal is accepted then this would set off a procurement exercise.



## CASE STUDY

# ST JAMES AND THE SHERRIFF CENTRE, WEST HAMPSTEAD, DIOCESE OF LONDON, COFE

[www.churchnw6.co.uk](http://www.churchnw6.co.uk) // [www.thesheriffcentre.co.uk](http://www.thesheriffcentre.co.uk)

Population: 33,751 (2011 Census)

**When the Post Office®'s West End Lane site in busy West Hampstead faced closure in 2012, Father Andrew, the vicar at St James offered the church as an alternative venue. The Grade II listed, A W Blomfield-designed church built in 1885-1888 would be providing a community service. Things didn't end there and the church is now home to the Sherriff Centre, housed inside the church which offers the Sanctuary Café (in the south aisle), a children's soft play area (Hullabaloo) in the north aisle, a florist's and the Icon gift shop, which has its shelving on castors so it can be moved during services.**

In March 2013, after discussions with the Post Office Network Transformation Team, the Diocese of London and architects, the scheme gained the support of the Church Buildings Council.

The church was made fully accessible with a ramp and automatic doors and there is informal café style seating towards the west

end of the church while seating for worship is towards the east end of the nave. The chancel remained unchanged and remains a focal point in the church.

The café, shop and soft play area were incorporated into the planning process early as it was soon clear that to ensure its long-term financial sustainability the project had to have a wide appeal and varied income streams. The final cost of the project was approximately £600,000 with funds raised through grants from the Posts Office and the Local Authority and other grant-funders.

After many months of business plans, presentations, fundraising and consultations building work started in April 2014 and their doors opened on 18th July, 2014.

Housed within an oak framed pod-type structure at the west end of the church, the Post Office® offers extended opening hours, three counter positions and a range of stationery for posting and packaging needs.

Open Mon-Saturday 8am-6pm, the Centre is a social enterprise organisation, so it is both a business and a charity and profits from its enterprises go to their charity to provide a debt advice service. With a start-up grant from the Hampstead Wells and Camden Trust they were able to employ a debt advice worker in December 2015 to establish this core service. Registered with the Financial Conduct Authority and a member of AdviceUK, the service is available two days per week in an office space within The Sherriff Centre.

The church now has its doors open all day every day, footfall has increased dramatically – it welcomes 3,500 people a week through its doors and is at the heart of its community - and its congregation has increased. It is also very involved with the work of St Laurence Larder, the area's Soup Kitchen and Food Bank. There are still improvements to be made - for instance, funds are needed to sound-proof the Lady Chapel for private prayer during the week as the venue can get noisy!

## ANALYSING THE RESULTS

Once you have all of this information and community feedback, you need to go through it and identify what people have suggested. Are there any common themes? Are several people suggesting a common solution? If you have carried out a survey or another form of consultation, make sure you make the results freely available for everyone to access.

It is a good idea to write up the results as a formal report. This can then be put up on the website or public notice board so the community can see the outcome. Funders will also ask to see the results of any consultation.

When you know what the problem is, and you have a solution to aim for, your project becomes much more focussed. You can build up a picture of what you want your community to look like 'after' the project is completed.

### Feasibility

It may be that suggestions have come forward that will involve specific adaptations to the building e.g. increased facilities or that a possible new user may have special requirements e.g. privacy for its clients. It is important to discuss such needs in detail to ensure they are understood at an early stage and are incorporated into the brief.

## CONTINUING ENGAGEMENT/ COMMUNICATION

You will need to keep in touch with the people who've taken the time and effort to give you their thoughts and ideas and let them know how the project is progressing and how they can become involved. As well as a website, you can use e-newsletters and updates on public notice boards. Always provide a contact person and contact details to make it easy for people who have questions or want to volunteer. (See Chapter 3 for more on how you can do this).

Organise more special days and invite people to come and see how far you've got. Putting up displays with photographs and plans and having people to explain them is a good way of continuing the dialogue. Invite continual feedback – you want people to feel ownership and then they will support you.

## VOLUNTEERS

Use consultation activities as **volunteer recruiting exercises and bring new people on board with specific skills**. Encourage new people to get involved. In some communities it's common that whenever volunteers are called for, the 'usual suspects' step forward.

These people can't do everything. You must have enough people to help out.

Ask members of the congregation to get involved as well as other people from within the community. Your project should encourage new people into the church building, so get new people involved as volunteer's right from the start.

## KEEPING PEOPLE ON SIDE

It is rare for a project not to face some level of opposition or at the very least expressions of concern. Take time over consulting everyone, and listen to all points of view. You can reassure people by keeping everyone informed as to what is actually happening as opposed to allowing rumours to circulate. Genuine concerns may mean that you have to revise your plans or modify your project. Above all, keep an open door and encourage questions and feedback.

And there may be **small steps** you could make in the short-term based on what people have said. This can be a good way of testing ideas before embarking on permanent changes. These could include:

- start opening the church at a regular time or increase opening times e.g. Wednesday morning coffee. People may have said that they didn't know the church was open;
- offering to become involved in existing local festivals/events;
- providing a venue for community activities e.g. a new cinema club;
- having a look at your churchyard – people may have said that they remember being able to walk through the churchyard, but are now too frightened due to anti-social behaviour. Liaise with the police and other support groups to see if a solution can be found.

## WHERE TO FIND MORE HELP

- Find out if anyone from your diocese or church body is already involved with your local authority and may be able to provide contacts.
- Ask for advice from your local **CVS** (Council for Voluntary Services) on which consultation methods may suit your community. To find groups in your area visit:  
[www.navca.org.uk/find-a-member-1](http://www.navca.org.uk/find-a-member-1)
- Contact your **Local Authority Research Team**. They can provide local statistics about your community. They may also be aware of other documents, strategies, and plans that exist. Perhaps you can link in with a Cultural Strategy, a Town Plan, or a Regeneration Area?
- Your **Local Authority Planning Department** may also be able to help on Community-Led Planning
- The **ACRE Network** provides training and guidance for communities on the development of a Community Led Plan (CLP.) If you are part of an existing community planning group or want to start one, then you are advised to contact your local organisation to discuss the toolkit and find out what support is available locally.  
[www.acre.org.uk/rural-issues/community-planning](http://www.acre.org.uk/rural-issues/community-planning)
- **Planning Aid England** provides free, independent and professional planning advice to communities who cannot afford to pay professional fees.  
[www.rtpi.org.uk/planning-aid](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/planning-aid)
- **Locality** support community organisations and offer guidance on Neighbourhood Planning and provides resources around developing a community project.  
[www.locality.org.uk/services-tools](http://www.locality.org.uk/services-tools)

## TOP TIPS



- Seek ideas from **every section** of the community, young and old. A community project is all about a **partnership approach**. Consider everybody's views.
- Use a **couple of consultation methods** to attract as many views and ideas as possible.
- Try to get feedback from a cross section of your community, this will ensure your feedback is a true representation of the people your church serves and avoid any project bias.
- Create an opportunity for some of the consultation to take place in the church building itself.
- Take **photos** of your consultation events in action! They are useful for the website and exhibitions and to and strengthen funding applications.
- Keep copies of forms/questionnaires that you create, and produce a report analysing the results as this will form an important part of your funding applications.
- Make sure you keep everyone informed and engaged throughout a project.
- Try not to deal with issues on a one-off basis by, for instance, trying to solve one immediate problem in isolation just because it is easy and achievable. Always see them as part of a bigger plan. You can always carry out the plan in smaller phases, which may give the congregation a better sense of achievement.

CHAPTER 2 CHECKLIST 

Have you collected evidence and information (baseline data), about your community?

Have you looked at any local plans and strategies that already exist? Have you ensured that your church is linked into the development of any new local plans?

Have you identified suitable consultation methods to allow everyone in your community to express their views?

Have you consulted all local groups?

Have you produced a report which details the results of your consultation exercise and shows your analysis and assessment on which ideas/solutions are most popular?

Have you checked that your project idea doesn't duplicate existing services?

Can you link up with other organisations and adopt a partnership approach to solving your community problem?



## FURTHER RESOURCES

**The Near Neighbours Project** (funded by DCLG) has produced a toolkit on consulting with your community: *Finding out – research and monitoring for project fundraising*.

This is based on the experiences of a wide range of communities, projects and faith groups that have successfully used research and monitoring to advance their work with neighbourhoods.

[www.cuf.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=87e6e568-9cc2-4ba2-a305-d122f78a7c9b](http://www.cuf.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=87e6e568-9cc2-4ba2-a305-d122f78a7c9b)

**Empowering design practices** (EDP) is a five-year design research project that aims to explore how community-led design can help empower those who look after historic places of worship to create more open, vibrant and sustainable places that respect and enhance their heritage. They are developing resources and practical tools which churches can use to engage with their wider communities and also talk through and test different options around making changes to their buildings. They have written up seven design stories from historic faith buildings which capture the development from the emerging need and vision and how they engaged with others in the process, through to the key design changes.

[www.empoweringdesign.net/design-stories-learning-from-past-projects.html](http://www.empoweringdesign.net/design-stories-learning-from-past-projects.html)

The project is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and has the following partners: the Open University, Historic England, the Historic Religious Buildings Alliance, the National Lottery Heritage Fund (formerly the Heritage Lottery Fund) and The Glass-House.

[www.empoweringdesignpractices.weebly.com](http://www.empoweringdesignpractices.weebly.com)

If you have identified a particular need within your community, it may be worth having a look at the **Cinnamon Network**, a charity that works to facilitate Christian social action.

They have partnered with projects like Christians Against Poverty, Trussell Trust Foodbanks and Street Pastors and now Cinnamon champions over 25 Recognised Projects. These are tried and tested social action projects that have been replicated across the country, and include great projects like CAP Job Clubs, CAP Money Courses, Make Lunch, Parish Nursing and Who Let the Dads Out? There are others that support young unemployed people or help develop healthy communities.

[www.cinnamonnetwork.co.uk/projects](http://www.cinnamonnetwork.co.uk/projects)

A team of Regional Cinnamon Advisers is able to offer local churches one-to-one support with mapping needs in local communities and in choosing and adapting an appropriate Cinnamon Recognised Project to fit their locality needs. Micro-grants are offered to any local church that wants to start one of the Cinnamon Recognised Projects and Courses.

[www.cinnamonnetwork.co.uk/micro-grants](http://www.cinnamonnetwork.co.uk/micro-grants)

The **Department for Communities and Local Government** has set up a website which brings together information and advice on a range of community rights. This includes Neighbourhood Planning, Asset of Community Value, Community Right to Bid, Community Asset Transfer, Community Ownership or management, Community Shares and Crowdfunding.

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/youve-got-the-power-a-quick-and-simple-guide-to-community-rights/youve-got-the-power-a-quick-and-simple-guide-to-community-rights](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/youve-got-the-power-a-quick-and-simple-guide-to-community-rights/youve-got-the-power-a-quick-and-simple-guide-to-community-rights)