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For your project to be successful, it should answer a real need in your community.

We can help you find out exactly what people want from their church.

Download the toolkit



Put together a profile of your community

You need to build up a picture of the people who live within your church's parish boundaries. Are they:

- Young families, older people or mature couples?
- Unemployed, professionals or people working in low-skilled local jobs?
- Is the parish in the commuter belt?
- Who is around during the daytime?
- What type of housing is there and is there enough affordable housing?

Next, collect information on local organisations and services:

- Where is your church located compared to housing and other community spaces or groups doing outreach work?
- What does your community already have? (e.g. faith buildings, shops, business services, village hall, etc).
- What services or activities already exist?
- What other community buildings are there?
- What services are missing? What would the community like to see? What would make life better and easier for them?
- Do you know of plans for new housing or other changes in your area? Contact your Local Authority Research Team to find out

Find information on your local demographics

Talk to people

If you want to know what people think of the existing services and if they have any ideas, then you need to ask them.

How you do this depends on the size of your parish. But talk to as many people as possible.

You can also use these activities to recruit new volunteers with specific skills. Get them involved right from the start.

Questionnaires

Send one to every house or business to make sure that everyone gets to have their say.

Give people enough time to think about your questions and make it easy for them to return their answers. Ask open questions and don't make the questionnaire too long.

Chat to people

Instead of getting people to fill in a form, fill it in for them while you chat.

Ask if you can talk to people in your local health centre, doctor's waiting room or pub. Don't ask too many questions and make sure they're open questions.

Publicity

Hand out flyers or leaflets in the street. Put up posters in local shops.

Ask for help to spread the word from local groups and charities. Give details of how people can get involved and provide feedback.

Suggestion boxes

Set up boxes in popular places for people to leave suggestions.

Community days or festivals

Organise a stall at an existing community event. You might need something like a competition or things for sale to draw people in.

Organise an event at the church

Organise a day of events. Serve drinks. Have a small exhibition. Do fun activities for children and families.

Invite local groups and give tours of the church. Provide papers and pens for people to write down their thoughts.

Guidance and templates

- [Church development plan](#) (566.06 KB)
- [Parish Resources: Community survey template](#) (73.49 KB)
- [Parish Resources: Talk to your community](#) (102.63 KB)

Other groups you should talk to

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.

Speak to:

- Your own parish or town council
- Community users of your church
- Local groups and organisations
- Local services
- Community buildings in your area
- Faith groups
- Local businesses

Try getting involved with the development of a [local plan](#). If you are involved, then the church will be included!

Analyse the results

You've collected all this information and feedback from your community. Now you need to go through it and see what people have suggested.

Are there any common themes or solutions?

Write up the results in a formal report and put it on your website. And don't forget to keep in touch with people to let them know how the project is going and how they can get involved.

[Find out more about analysing your results](#)

Case studies

- [Case study: St Michael Flordon](#) (131.01 KB)
- [Case study: St Leonards Yarpole](#) (130.48 KB)

Next steps

To make your vision become a reality you need to start thinking about:

- What changes, if any, you need to make to the building?
- Putting together a team of people to take this forward
- Talking to your diocese about faculty
- Developing a structure to manage the project in the short, medium and long term
- The long-term future of your project's activities

Want more help?

[Creative uses for your building](#)

[Find out what other churches are doing to support their community](#)

[Replicate a social action project in your area](#)

[Over 25 tried and tested projects across the country](#)

[Find community-led organisations near you](#)

[Join the national network of community-led organisations](#)

[What consultation method is best for you?](#)

[Ask your local Council for Voluntary Service for advice](#)

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