



The Church Buildings Council has carried out research on struggling churches. This comes out of our work on church buildings where there is a concern about their future as local centres of worship and mission and where closure is being considered. We advise parishes and dioceses on the heritage significance of these churches and their furnishings and churchyards, and on the scope for change which might bring about a sustainable future for them in worship use.

The research looks at the last fifteen years of casework to identify patterns. Where are the struggling churches and closures cases? What sort of communities do they serve? What sort of buildings are they? It also draws on a survey of stakeholders across dioceses about what they consider to be the reasons for church buildings to struggle, how they make use of our service and their take-up of other resources, especially the strategic review model.

The report makes recommendations for improvements to our service and explores opportunities for collaborative working and for further research.

The findings include the following key points:

- Small parishes (in population terms) including the very smallest, produce few struggling churches and closures;
- Churches in the most deprived parishes in the country are far more likely to struggle than those in less deprived areas and even more likely to close;
- Listed churches are less likely to struggle or close than unlisted churches. The higher the listing grade, the less likely is the church to struggle or close. As a result of this pattern of closures, the Church of England estate is becoming more concentrated on listed churches and yet more so in the higher grades;
- The lack of volunteers to help manage churches and their activities is identified as a key factor leading to consideration of closure;
- There is a relatively low use of strategic reviews as the basis for closure proposals but some signs that they are being taken up by dioceses;

- There is a common (but not universal) tendency for the decision on closure to be settled by the time the CBC is involved.

The full report is available [here](#)

For further information, please contact us using our [contact page](#)

## Also of Interest

### Church Buildings Reports and Survey Reports

We advise parishes and dioceses on struggling churches

### Develop a community project

Resources to develop the potential of open and sustainable churches

### Diocesan strategic reviews

Integrated thinking about church buildings with mission and ministry

### Church closure

Find out more about parish reorganisation and the closure process

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**Source URL:** <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/church-buildings-council/how-we-manage-our-buildings/struggling-churches-research>