



MAP for Derby Diocese ideas for getting to know your community

introduction

As well as specific tools and techniques that might be helpful, such as the **Community Listening Exercise**, **Parish History Audit** and **Stakeholder Interviews** (which all have separate leaflets about them available through the MAP for Derby Diocese web pages), there are lots of other sources of information that you can use to research your community and get to know what makes it tick (and perhaps what is stopping it ticking).

This resource is designed to give you plenty of ideas about where you can look. It may trigger other ideas that are individual to you. If you think you have come up with something that isn't included here and might be useful to others, please do let us know; we may then be able to include it in an updated version of this resource.

when to use this resource

This resource is most appropriate for use during stage two of MAP for Derby Diocese, to help the church to reflect on their journey toward God's calling so far. It is particularly helpful whilst considering the following questions in that stage:

- What is our history?
- With whom do we share our life and what do they say about us?

some initial considerations

what is your community?

Before you can start the audit of your community, it's worth spending a little time considering how your community is defined. For some, the parish boundary will form an obvious limit, with a sense of belonging around the town, village or area that you serve. However, as populations move, grow and change, how the community boundaries are defined and perceived by others may not be the same as how the parish system defines them.

- Do your parish boundaries accurately reflect your community boundaries? If not, how are they different, and why?
- Is there a strong sense of 'community' in your area, or does the word have negative associations for the people who live around you?

- Is your community defined by geography, or by something else (work patterns, housing areas, demographics)?
- Are your community boundaries fluid or well defined?
- How might what you discover about your community influence your approach?

look for the good

When you're researching your community, there is a tendency to look for the problems. We're quick to research crime figures and levels of drug abuse. But there will be other things that are going well in your community which might offer an opportunity to either join in with or form partnerships around – so look for the good as well as the bad.

look beyond the headlines

As well as looking for good news, there will be things in your community that aren't reported. Perhaps there is stigma surrounding the issue, or it isn't seen as important by others. Sometimes it's necessary to look beyond the published information, and find the stories that aren't being told.

As you research, try to understand what is at the heart of your community and the glue that holds it together.

be involved

As well as being a listener in your community, it's worth being a participant too. This will give you permission and authenticity as you seek information and then start to work in and for your community.

Random acts of kindness – Giving away free coffee at the train station is great way of earning goodwill and starting conversations. It doesn't have to be organised though; simply encourage the congregation to be aware of opportunities to bless others.

Be involved in the social scene – Spend time in the pub, form a quiz team or a darts team.

Take on a community role – Join the Summer fete organising committee, be a positive presence at community events

internet research

You can find out a lot about a community with relatively little effort using the internet. One person with a few hours to spare can achieve quite a lot. Use a search engine (e.g. Google) and type in your community name and see what comes up – here are some other sites and searches that might prove helpful:

Community Profiles – North East Derbyshire Citizen's Advice Bureau has produced community profiles for neighbourhoods across the whole county and is online at www.ned-cab.org.uk/communityprofile.asp. You will need to know the council wards that are in your parish.

Parish Spotlight – a great source of a huge amount of data about your community, provided by the National Church and accessible via the diocesan website. Go to <http://www.derby.anglican.org/en/resources/parish-spotlights.html> and then choose your deanery and parish.

Community Engagement pages – the diocesan website also has a page dedicated to community engagement that might give you some more ideas. Go to <http://www.derby.anglican.org/en/our-mission/community-engagement.html>.

Facebook groups – Search for your village, town or community area and see what comments are being made (good and bad).

Google Maps – Roll your mouse over the map and see what balloons pop up with information and website addresses.

Parish, district or town council website – Often they will have a record of past meetings and decisions that will help you to see where local interest lies.

other information sources

There are also other sources of information you can use that don't have to use the internet for some research. Here are just a few ideas:

Local newspaper – scan the paper and see what topics are recurring, or what people are writing about in the letters page.

Information boards – Local community boards in your village, the Co-operative community board or a parish, town or council board may well give you information about live topics of concern or interest.

Meeting documentation – Annual General Meeting and other minutes from councils and other groups in your area are often available for study.

Community Centre – Go along to the community centre in your area if you have one and see what's going on and what's being advertised

Local authority – Your local authority might have all sorts of information that will help you. For example, is there a community strategy, or planning department local plan (giving information on new building developments).

map your community

A community mapping exercise is a good thing to do on a church away day or congregational meeting.

Gather as many people from the congregation as possible and ask them to list all the organisations in the community that they can think of.

Then, link them together and see where the connections are – local shops would have a link to the trade association. Neighbourhood Watch would link to the police.

Finally, consider what links the church might have to these organisations – through individual members of the congregations who are involved, services and events that happen in the church, statutory bodies or trustees.

You could produce a large network diagram, with all the organisations shown, the church in the middle and the connections between them all and the information flow between them. You may be

surprised just how many there are, and it could form a part of the MAP information displayed in the church (but be careful of displaying personal information without permission).

A community map like this can be very helpful in understanding where you have a presence in the community and where you don't, where your information is coming from and where you will need to open up new dialogues to find out more. Use the information to plan further research, linking these into a **Community Listening Exercise** (see the separate information leaflet).

Doing this is a great way of getting the whole congregation involved (and celebrating the community links you have).

produce a storyboard

As you move forward, you may want to put up a display of the story of your community and the church in the church building. It could even have a timeline – rather like a 'Bayeux Tapestry'!

A board like this will help to keep your church informed, but it also might spark conversations in the community as others see the board.

You could create a space where people could pin comments, questions and observations about the display, which might give you insight and further information. It will also be a way of verifying the information you've gathered is correct.

community events

Use existing events

Arrange to have a stall or display at an existing car boot sale, school fair, flower festival or whatever goes on in your community. Have a person on the stall to talk to those who pass by (remember, it isn't about speaking at this stage but about listening), as well as a comments board. Not all the comments will be positive, but even when they are poorly expressed they can contain truth. Grace required!

Community network event

Put on a social evening for the community with free refreshments. Invite local organisations to come and set up an information stall, as well as a stall for the church and for the MAP project. Set up a comments board. Listening to conversations and chatting to people will tell you a great deal about what is going on in your community.

surveys

You can use either web-based or paper surveys with simple questions, asking people about the church or about areas of concern. However, you need to be aware that return rates tend to be low, and results are often skewed because those who respond are limited to particular groups – those who simply like filling in surveys or those with a strong opinion.

the plunge

This is a creative and fun way of getting the whole of the church into their community. The Plunge is a game, but it's also a survey - in playing the game people will naturally start to find out about the detail of the place where the church is located.

The process is simple.

1. Create a list of words

Draw up a list of words that people may be able to find in and around their community – for example, in literature, noticeboards, shop windows, libraries and other public spaces. Write each word on a slip of paper, fold it and place it in a basket or hat.

2. Gather some people

Gather together a group of people – the more varied they are, the better. They can be churchgoers, non-churchgoers and people on the fringes; older people as well as youth and children; people from differing backgrounds.

3. Get everyone to pick a word

Ask everyone to pick a word out of the hat you've prepared.

4. Send everyone out to find their word

Send people out to look for the word that they have drawn anywhere they like in the community (as long as they're allowed to go there!) Be aware of safety and safeguarding. Some may wish to go on their own, but it's lovely to go in groups and look for all the words the groups have. Families can go together, but ensure that children and vulnerable adults are cared for appropriately.

Ask the groups to make a note of where they found their words, and what they found out about the place where they found it. If possible, bring back something from the place with the word on it (again, staying on the right side of the law!) Even better, get people to use their own camera phones to take pictures of where they found them.

5. Report back

Gather back at an appointed time and get all the groups to share briefly what they found. Make sure someone is taking notes or writing on a flipchart!

The information gathered can then be used during the MAP process, and may well lead to areas of further investigation. The materials produced could be added to the church and community storyboard, if you're producing one.

To make the event more enjoyable, you could set it in a shared church day with activities and shared food; or make it a part of another community event.

people and places

There are lots of other places you can go to ask about your community. Link them into a **Community Listening Exercise** or a **Stakeholder Interview** (see the separate information leaflets) – or simply go and have a chat to see what they think of the place they live and work. They're likely to have an opinion and some interesting perspectives, and at the same time you're building relationships.

Here are some ideas, but there will be plenty more that are specific to your community:

- Shops, local businesses, pubs and restaurants
- Schools (including school governors)
- Hospitals and surgeries
- Clubs and charities
- The Royal British Legion
- Working men's clubs
- Volunteer organisations
- Local government departments
- Community Commissioning groups
- The Police and Community safety partnerships for the police