MAP for Derby Diocese

stakeholder interviews

introduction

Stakeholder interviews are conversations with people with an interest (i.e. a stake) in the community. They can include; people who depend on the community for their livelihood, people who provide public services to the community, people who represent the community to government and people who represent particular interests within the community. Because of their interest in the community these stakeholders will have particular insights into and opinions about the community.

The purpose of the conversations with these stakeholders is to understand their insights and opinions, and to test out impressions about the community gained from other Community Audit Adeas (see the separate resource, which also gives some useful information before you start). Sometimes they can also be very effective further into the process, when you are looking at a specific area for action. At this point you can be more specific about interviewees and the questions you ask them.

This may be the first time that the church has specifically spent time simply listening to the views of people outside the church. The interviews can, therefore, be an important first step in developing relationships with people in the community. During the development and implementation of a MAP, you might like to invite the stakeholders to a follow-up meeting where the vision, plan and priorities identified through the MAP process can be shared with them.

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 question in that stage:

- with whom do we share our life and what do they say about us?

process

1. Choose carefully who will conduct the interviews. You will need people with the confidence to make the practical arrangements for the interviews and who will be able to conduct the interview and gather meaningful information from the meeting.

2. Identify potential stakeholders to be interviewed and think about the possible insights that each stakeholder might have. For example, teachers and youth workers are likely to have

insights into issues affecting children and young people in the community; doctors and community nurses are likely to have insights into issues affecting older people. For some more ideas, see the separate resource on **Community Audit Ideas**. Check that you have included sufficient stakeholders to give a cross-section of insights into issues affecting the community. Don't forget that some of the potential stakeholders may already be associated with your church!

When considering which stakeholders to interview, consider their influence in the community and their interest in the place of the church in that community; those that are high in both are definitely worth engaging, whereas those who are low in both of these categories might be lower on your priority list.

3. Ensure that there is a coordinated approach if you have different teams or individuals looking at differing aspects of community, so that one person doesn't receive requests from several different people.

4. When designing the questions, seek the views of anyone with experience and expertise concerning specific information that you have gathered from elsewhere. Finding information from more than one source will help to ensure that it's accurate and that you're travelling in the right direction with your research.

5. Send a letter to each stakeholder seeking permission to interview them, explaining the purpose of the interview, and indicating that contact will be made by telephone to arrange a suitable time and place for the interview. It's often best if this letter comes from a member of the clergy team, so that the recipient knows that it's 'official'.

6. Give some training to those who will carry out the interviews, and make sure they're clear on what's required. The training should cover the following points:

   - Remember that you are representing the church to each stakeholder. Consider carefully how you present yourself: your appearance, your timekeeping, and your conduct.

   - Ensure you do some background research before you go. What is the nature and current situation of the organisation? For example, if you're going to see a head teacher of a school, what was its last Ofsted report like? You don't have to refer to it but it may help to ask good questions in a sensitive way.

   - Remind the stakeholder about the purpose of the interview.

   - Assure the stakeholder that her / his responses will be treated confidentially. However, try and gather information in a form that can be shared (i.e. summary data without personal information). In this way, it can be used more freely by those in the church.

   - Remind the stakeholder that the interview will take approximately 30 minutes.

   - Ask the questions (you may want to adapt or change these for your own situation):

     - In your opinion, what is good about our community / village / town? What is there to celebrate our community / village / town?

     - What are the three things that people most often talk to you about in connection with our community / village / town?

    - In your opinion, what are the issues facing our community / village / town? Do you know if anyone is addressing these issues?

    - What would make a significant difference to your business / school / surgery / church / housing estate / etc.?

    - Is there anything else you would like to say?

- Take short notes of the stakeholder's responses to the questions.

- Ask open questions (i.e. not ones that just need a 'yes' or 'no'). Follow up questions will also help to gain more information and will show that you have listened well.

- Don't promise action by the church to resolve a specific issue or problem. It probably won't be clear whether it would be possible or appropriate for the church to help. Promising something and then not delivering is much worse than not offering in the first place.

- Don't get into arguments trying to defend a specific point of view – this is a listening exercise, and being seen to be listening is important.

- At the end of the interview explain what happens next. Maybe ask whether the stakeholder would be interested in attending a follow-up meeting at which the findings of the consultation exercise are presented.

- Remember to write up your notes, and give your notes to the coordinator as soon as possible. Sometimes it's helpful to have someone come along whose only role is to take notes, leaving the interviewer free to listen very well.

- Remember that the interviews are confidential – so do not do not share information without agreement to do so beforehand. One way to approach this is to agree a synopsis of the information that will be shared with the interviewee after you have spoken to them.

- The Faith in Action materials, available from the community officers in the Mission and Ministry team, have some great material on Active Listening which might be helpful (see Ch.2 1.4).

7. Assign stakeholders to each interviewer. Consider carefully who should interview each stakeholder, particularly those who have access to sensitive information (e.g., doctors) or have a high profile within the community (e.g., elected representatives). Consider whether the interviewer should be someone with an official position within the church (e.g., ordained minister, Churchwarden).

8. Each interviewer should arrange with the stakeholders suitable times and places for the interviews.