

Fit for mission...?



**A strategic planning resource
to help parishes be effective for community mission
in the twenty-first century.**

Church & Society
Department
March 2009

 THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
Diocese of Manchester

Introduction

“There is a lot of goodwill towards the church...we hear positive comments about what we are doing and the welcome we offer. There is more respect for the environment around the church.”



As you have been given this guide, the chances are that you are thinking about what it means to be a local church. In this short booklet we have tried to cover the who, what, when and how of Community Audits and development schemes.

It is not a general booklet designed to gather dust in the Parish Office, but a specific guide for a real journey that may lead to new mission and ministry in your parish.

It is an essential tool in proving that your project is well researched and realistic. Potential funders for any new work, will require an audit process to have been completed to prove 'evidence of need'.

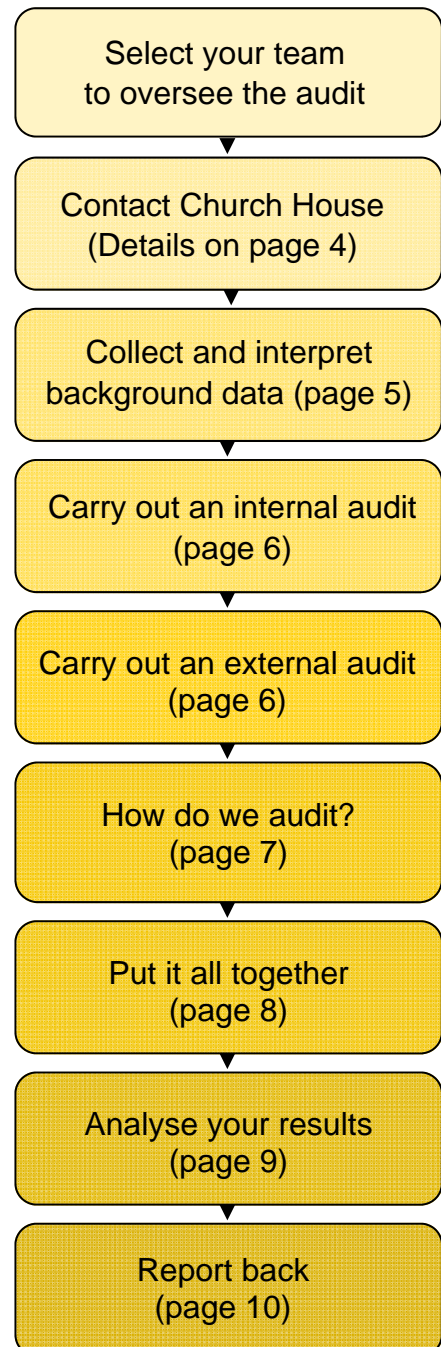
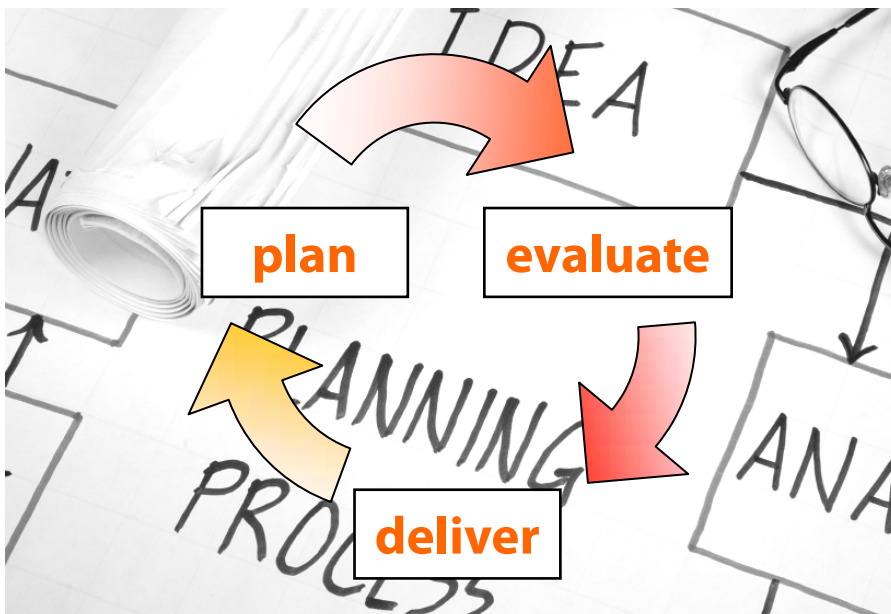
Most importantly of all, any plans you make depend on God, you and your supporters. The Church and Society team will support you along the journey, but the journey is your own.

Getting started

Starting a Parish Audit can be daunting.

Good **planning** is essential, as is being able to **evaluate** your findings effectively in order to **deliver** your results.

By following the steps outlined in the flowchart on this page (complete with page references), you should be able to begin to piece together your parish audit.



Get in touch:

Who to contact about your parish audit

General Enquiries:

Church & Society Department
Church House,
90 Deansgate
Manchester
M3 2GH

Tel 0161 828 1412
Fax 0161 828 1485

For advice on carrying out an audit and setting up community projects contact



Mike France, Church & Community Development Officer

Phone 0161 828 1475

Email mikefrance@manchester.anglican.org

For maps and statistical information on your parish contact



Alison Peacock, Mission Planning Officer

Phone 0161 828 1447

Email apeacock@manchester.anglican.org

For advice on funding and other resources contact



Dian Leppington, Parish Resources Advisor

Phone 0161 828 1446

Email dleppington@manchester.anglican.org

For advice on Grantnet and grants training contact



Sue Heil, Resources Support Officer

Phone 0161 828 1445

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Collecting and interpreting background data

Collecting and interpreting background data is essential to build up a picture of your wider community, its strengths and weaknesses and most importantly, its needs.

This is more complicated than a church audit, so it will take longer. Statistics are a good place to start and are available from the Church and Society Department. Alison Peacock, our Mission Planning Officer (contact details on opposite page) can provide you with statistical details of your parish such as:

Population Counts including

- 2001 Census
- Updates from Mid-Year Estimated

Other census information including

- Ethnic composition
- Qualification levels
- Employment

Deprivation scores including

- Index of Multiple Deprivation
- Crime and Disorder
- Income Deprivation Affecting Children

Your local council may also have useful information on its own website. Quantity and detail will vary according to the authority, but it is worth looking to see what is available.

Collecting statistics is only a small part of the picture. It is more important draw upon the local knowledge and ideas of other people and to build relationships.

Ask yourselves: “*what does this information say to you?*”

Consider in particular

- Any changes in the population make-up
- A heavy prevalence of elderly or young people
- Low academic achievement rates.

“collecting statistics is only a small part of the picture.”

Additional up-to-date statistics on small areas can also be obtained from the Neighbourhood Statistics website:

www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk

This site is especially useful if you are looking for data on areas other than the parish e.g. an estate crossing a parish boundary or a regeneration area.

Internal and external audits



Internal Audits

A good place to start when carrying out an internal audit of your church is to ask yourselves: what does our church do at present?

This might involve commenting on how your buildings are currently used and the people that use them. Another good question to ask yourselves is who are we?

- How many church members are there?
- Where do they live?
- What ethnic groups do they belong to?
- Are there any disabled people?
- What type of people are the leaders?
- What roles do church members have in the community?

Questions to get you going

The following quantitative questions may help you with your thinking:

1) How are our buildings used?

For example:

- Worship
- Funerals
- Weddings
- Uniformed Groups
- Luncheon clubs
- Fairs
- Slimming Clubs

Remember to include **how many people attend**, you can get this information from the parish registers, club attendance records or estimations. Another question might be:

2) What do we do in our community? E.g.

- Visiting the bereaved
- Visiting the sick and elderly
- Community service order placements
- Luncheon clubs
- Fundraising for church and charity
- Youth groups
- Playgroup and nursery

External Audits

A good way to begin looking at secular activity in your parish is to have a look at other groups providing support and facilities for the local community and asking;

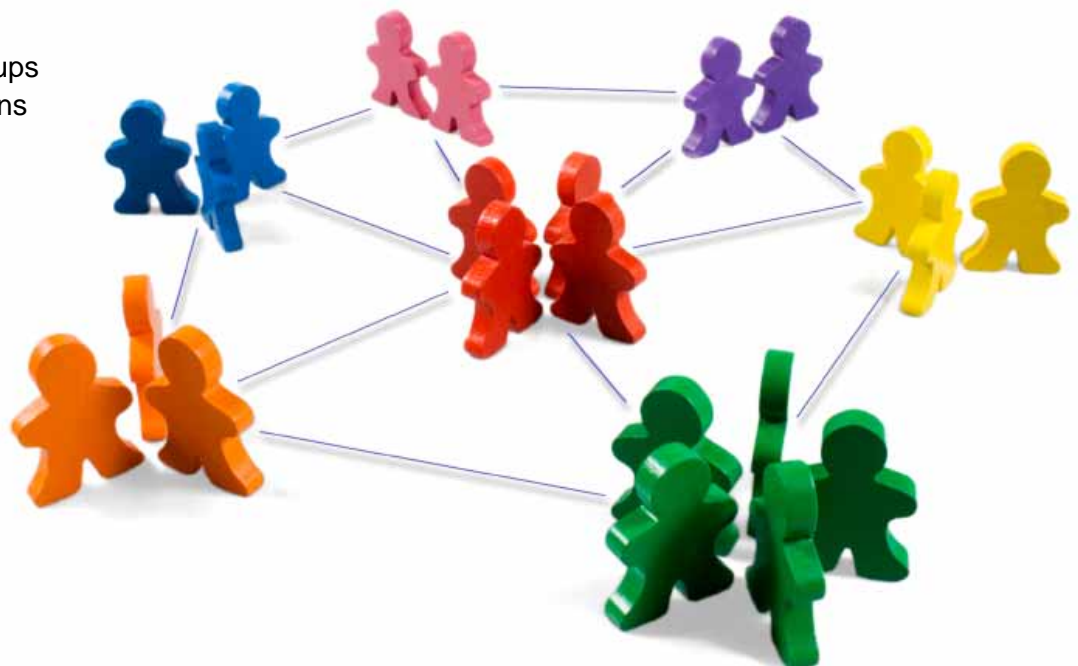
Who else is active in our Community?

Some examples of key partners include

- GPs and health centres
- Schools
- Children's centres
- Community centres
- Sports clubs
- Arts and creative groups
- Voluntary organisations
- Local history clubs
- Lunch clubs
- Community police
- Councillors
- Youth workers
- Other faith groups
- Local media
- Libraries
- Shops

Consider the following

- **What do these groups think about the church?**
- **Could they help us to audit?**



How do we audit?



So! Now you've gathered some background information on the area, surveyed how your church is used and talked to other groups in the community; it's time to put together your audit together.

Below are some guidelines to help you put together a successful audit:

- Getting a group of local people together (church and non-church if possible), chatting to them about how they view the church within the community and noting their answers is a really useful way to begin.
- A good way of doing this is to have someone write down all the suggested answers on large sheets of paper so that everyone can see the bigger picture build up.
- You could also encourage church members to spend some time talking with other people in community spaces e.g. in the post office, in health centres or outside schools. It is important to listen carefully and try to pick out what is important in the area and how they feel about it.
- Surveys produced from distributing carefully-designed questionnaires are also a good place to start.
- Asking local primary school children to do some interviews with older people in the area is a great way to piece together the history of the community and illustrate it with personal stories, as well as encouraging people to interact.
- If you decide to focus on the views of one particular group e.g. mothers with young children, teenagers or older people, arrange to meet with them to find out their views. Have some questions in mind to help the conversation flow and take careful notes of what they say. Photographs of your area can be a very useful tool in helping people to begin to talk.

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- Most importantly-make it fun! Creating colourful collages or banners are a great way to get people involved
 - In addition to the statistical information available from council websites, there may also be an officer in your local council who can help, e.g. a community education officer (the Chief Executive's Department will be able to tell you which is the appropriate department.)
 - There will also be professional people who will have a knowledge of the area e.g. doctors, teachers, health workers, community workers, social workers and police officers. They may suggest reports and surveys already available and might save you time.



“Most importantly... make it fun!”

Putting it all together

The time has come to start putting your audit together, but where to begin?

Below are some suggestions to help get your parish audit team started on the process of auditing.

Begin your audit by asking yourselves: what is our area like?

A copy of the Parish map is a good way to begin this exercise (remember that copyright acknowledgements and restrictions will apply).

Using coloured pens and stickers, mark things you think are important to the church and the things you think are important to the community e.g. church buildings, shops, different types of housing and so on. Some of the topics you may wish to cover are:

- Housing
- Employment
- Education
- Provision of health care
- Types of people living here
- Shopping
- Play facilities



Questions to think about:

- **What changes have taken place that have affected the life of our community?**
- **What things in our community are a cause for joy?**
- **What things in our community are a cause for sorrow?**

Analysing the results

Early indicators: planning for action

Once you have placed your audit together, its time to think about the results you have gathered.

You could arrange a meeting (maybe after a Sunday service) where you can share your ideas. Your ideas at this point might include:

What things in our church are cause for joy? For example; fellowship, worship, the thriving Scouts group, many people who are willing to help.

What things in our church are a cause for sorrow? For example; too few young people, tension between groups, members of the Mother's Union all being over 70.

What would we like to see in the future? e.g. more young people, the buildings getting more use.

Once you have an idea of the categories above, it's time to draw up a plan of action.

The following questions are intended as guidelines to get you thinking about this exercise:

- What are the good things we should support?
- What are the sad things we should do something about?

List your answers on large sheets of paper and use different colours, so everyone can see and prioritise your ideas in order of importance.

Once you have done this, take a look at the ideas you have written down and decide what your parish needs to do about them, then determine which of these needs are especially important to the parish.

As it is sometimes useful to explain why you have decided to focus on a particular need, it is a good idea to put your ideas into a table with one column headed 'Need' and another headed 'Reason'.



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Reporting back

When you have completed your audit, you should have gained a greater knowledge of your community's needs.

It is important to have a written record of what you have done to refer to in the future. It's also important to feedback this information to the congregation and other members of the community through the presentation of your ideas; this could be done at a special meeting. Think about holding an event that celebrates the area, the role of the church and looking at what else could happen in the future.

Below is our suggested format for presenting the information you have collected through your research.

1) Look again at the Joys and Sorrows categories you developed and ask:

- What good things have we found out about in our church and community?
- What sad things have we found out about in our church and community?

2) Now look at what could we do?

- How could we support those things which are good in our church and community?
- How could we work at doing something about the sad things?
- What are our strong points?
- Who also shares our concerns?
- Who could we work with to support the good things or do something about the sad things?

3) Moving forward: a vision for the future

- Have our hopes for the future been changed by what we have learned?
- Have our hopes been strengthened?



“It’s important to feedback information to the congregation and community.”