



How to ...

Engage with new areas of housing

Welcome

In many parishes across the Diocese of Bristol new areas of housing are being established. Some of these are small developments, extensions to existing housing areas or plots of infilling. In other areas whole new communities are being created with hundreds or even thousands of homes being built.

The ministry of welcome is at the heart of the Gospel and we should be aware of this truth when engaging with those people who move into these communities.

'Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.'

Romans 15.7

Moving home, into a new community can be a stressful, exciting, apprehensive and hope-filled time. Anyone moving into a new community, or attending one of our churches should be made to feel welcome.

Anybody who comes as a stranger is in need of a friendly face to welcome him or her. God's people should be that face, "I was a stranger and you invited me in" (Matthew 25v35). As Christians, we are called to "show hospitality to strangers" (Hebrews 13v1, Romans 12v13).

"In these times of housing crisis in which building new homes has been defined as a government priority, many cities, towns and villages are experiencing growth through new housing. Our challenge as Christians is how we respond to these new communities with welcome and blessing. The New Housing Hub is a network that has been established to inspire, resource and connect pioneers, churches and individual Christians across the country and from all church traditions to respond to this challenge and engage with these new communities." *New Housing Hub*

The National New Housing Hub has set up in partnership with Fresh Expressions, Churches Together in England and Baptists Together for those engaging or wanting to engage in new housing developments. The best way to make contact is through the Facebook group (link below).

Ideas:

- Provide a welcome pack to be delivered to new homes. Include some friendly words of welcome, details about the local community, relevant maps and information about the church. You might also choose to include a tea bag or bar of chocolate as a welcoming gesture;
- Make sure that new houses get included in any church leafleting that takes place, such as Christmas and Easter service times;
- Many new communities have community Facebook groups set up as a place for residents to meet one another and ask questions. If appropriate why not ask to join the group to offer support and answers to questions people are asking;
- Include the area in your prayer times and prayer diaries;
- Advertise church run community activities such toddler groups, lunch clubs, holiday clubs, support groups or coffee mornings;

- Support community development through hosting community gatherings such as a BBQ, fun day, open air nativity, LIGHT party, litter pick or quiz night etc....
- Speak to and work with the developer. One area successfully established partnership with a local developer through a shared recognition that the developer held expertise and experience in building houses, yet the church held expertise and experience in building community;
- Explore with the council whether any Section 106 community development money has been set aside to be used within the community. There may be opportunities for supporting the successful use of this funding within that community for its benefit;
- If a new school has been built as part of the development meet with them and explore what ways you may be able to support and work with them;
- Be creative. One church, for example, hired a van for a community trip to IKEA from a new build area. Another gathered together residents who had issues with the new builds to approach the developer together to fix the issues.

Fresh Expressions and pioneering

For those considering a Fresh Expression as a way of engaging with their area of new housing, there are resources on both the diocesan website and the national Fresh Expressions website to support you in exploring this further. www.bristol.anglican.org/fresh-expressions/

Useful links:

'How to... provide a great welcome'

<https://www.bristol.anglican.org/documents/how-provide-great-welcome/>

Fresh Expressions

<https://freshexpressions.org.uk>

www.bristol.anglican.org/fresh-expressions/

Churches Together in England

This website includes a range of resources for those working in these contexts including a 10 top tips for church leaders guide.

[www.cte.org.uk/Groups/136071/Home/Resources/Evangelisation/Evangelisation Archive/New Housing/New Housing.aspx](http://www.cte.org.uk/Groups/136071/Home/Resources/Evangelisation/Evangelisation%20Archive/New%20Housing/New%20Housing.aspx)

New Housing Hub Facebook Group

https://www.facebook.com/groups/453601345011455/?ref=br_rs