

10 Top Tips for Outreach to New Housing Areas*

These suggestions are particularly relevant when people are moving into homes on a new estate of houses, as many are designed to help people get to know their neighbours and introduce the local Church, but some of them will work at any time.

1. **Prayer-Walk the New Housing Area.** In Chafford Hundred, in Thurrock, the prayer-walks started when the new development was just a building site. A small group of people walked round the area and prayed quietly for all the people who will live there. Once homes are occupied, people who are praying can also deliver a small sheet of paper asking residents to contact the church if they have any prayer requests (need to include contact details).
2. **Conduct a Community Survey.** This involves knocking on people's doors or interviewing them outside a community meeting place (like a supermarket) and asking for views on the community and what they like or don't like. Also asking what they think the church could do. There are details on how to do a community survey in another document on this page of the Chelmsford Diocesan website.
3. **Produce an Information Leaflet and Website and use Social Media.** The information leaflet that goes through people's doors can give details of the website and social media. NB The website must be kept up-to-date. At East Village on the Olympic Park the Pioneer Minister says that facebook is essential. Twitter is increasingly popular.
4. **Visit with a Welcome Pack.** If the Church has built up good relationships with the Developer and Housing Association, it's possible to get advance notice of when people are moving in and visit with a Welcome Pack of useful local information (eg a bus timetable), a Church Leaflet, a Prayer Card and possibly a small gift. In one development a local supermarket gave a packet of biscuits free to be included in the Welcome Pack.
5. **Blessing of New Homes.** This can be offered in the Church Leaflet
6. **Hold a Community Event.** At Beaulieu, just outside Chelmsford, the local Vicar organised an open-air Christmas Carol Service followed by coffee and mince-pies. In Stratford, East London, 10 Churches worked together to put on a "Love Stratford" Festival. The aim was to bless the community and everything was free. See pictures at <http://www.stratfordchurches.co.uk/galleries/lovestrat.html>
7. **Plan some children's activities.** Holiday Clubs and Messy Church work well.
8. **Advertise an Open Afternoon at the Church** (if the Church is near the new housing). Cream Teas, a Flower Festival, a Bouncy Castle and other activities for children. Be radical and don't charge, or just invite a donation.
9. **Discuss Plans and Issues with Other Groups in the Area** (eg a Residents' Forum). Issues might be raised by the community survey and church people can join with other groups in the area to campaign about things – at Barking Riverside the Church led the successful campaign for a better bus service for the new housing area.
10. **Conduct an Environmental Project.** At New Braiswick Park, Colchester, the Church organised a litter-pick for residents followed by bacon rolls at the Church House. In some places the Church has taken a lead in forming a community group to turn a patch of waste-ground into a community garden, on a temporary "pop-up" or permanent basis.

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** Based on ideas originally drawn up by Northamptonshire Churches and used with permission*