

## Ways of engaging with your community

There are different approaches to working in communities.

The table below highlights some of the distinctions between them and draws out their strengths and drawbacks.

When seeking to get involved, it is important to be clear which model(s) are being pursued as failure to do so can sometimes cause unnecessary misunderstanding and conflict, within both the church and the community.

Community Provision (through Community Project etc)	Community Campaigning	Community Development
<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides services to those in need</li> <li>• Helps people cope with their present circumstances</li> <li>• Good in crisis situations</li> <li>• Good for building new contacts</li> <li>• Possibility of working with other agencies where there are common goals</li> <li>• More scope for overt Christian ethos and values</li> <li>• Clearly identifies the church or group of churches taking action</li> </ul>	<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tackles issues that directly affects people's lives e.g. social, political, economic.</li> <li>• Organises local people to tackle the issues together</li> <li>• Is more responsive to 'real' local needs</li> <li>• Helps people work together for improvement of quality of life in the community.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draws its agenda from people's immediate experiences and needs, not from the perception of need by others</li> <li>• Helps people recognise their own and their communities' resources and use them to the common good.</li> <li>• Enables people to take increased control over their own lives and to participate in decision-making affecting them</li> <li>• Provides possibility of long term change</li> <li>• Builds long term links and trust with local agencies - people are not working to their own agenda.</li> <li>• Can incorporate Community Provision (usually by local people or controlled by them) and Community Campaigning</li> <li>• Helps by focusing on community relations</li> </ul>

<p><b>Drawbacks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tends to focus on effects rather than the roots causes of the problems</li> <li>• Can create over dependence on the helper</li> <li>• Can leave the cause of problems unaffected.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Drawbacks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sometimes focussed on tasks to be done and particular issues rather than individual community needs.</li> <li>• Can be short term e.g. a campaign about a particular issue which brings change to the lives of local people but is not followed up adequately.</li> <li>• Possible dilution of Christian ethos and values</li> </ul>	<p><b>Drawbacks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issues can arise around how much overt Christian influence can be exercised over a project as well as questions of partnership with non Christians.</li> </ul>
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*This table was originally published in Love in Action, a church resource pack written by Fran Beckett for The Shaftesbury Society (1996).*