

Facilitator's Guide: Housing Memorial Listening Exercise

This guide is designed to help facilitate district, circuit and local church listening exercises as part of the Housing Memorial Programme. The purpose is to gather experiences, identify barriers, understand support needs, and capture aspirations for how Methodist land and buildings could contribute to addressing the housing crisis. Listening exercises should take place by the end of **November 2026**.

Purpose of the Listening Exercise

The Housing Memorial Working Group wants to hear directly from churches, circuits and individual Methodists about:

- Barriers to using church land and buildings for housing.
- Changes that could help overcome those barriers.
- Support needed from the wider Methodist Church.
- The potential impact of church enabled housing in communities and being a justice seeking church.

The exercise is intended to listen rather than debate, gather evidence rather than make decisions, and ensure everyone's experience is heard.

How to hold the listening exercise

You can choose to hold the listening exercise online or in person.

Online

Choose zoom or teams depending on what is used locally

Make sure people know the meeting will be recorded and transcribed. Ask consent for the recording to be sent to the housing memorial group for review for the information gathering exercise.

If you are going to have a large group, make use of breakout rooms so participants can discuss topics in smaller groups before coming back as one group.

In person listening exercise

Room Setup

Arrange participants around tables to encourage conversation. Ensure every table has paper and pens

Welcome and Introduction

Facilitator Script

"Thank you for taking part in this Housing Memorial listening exercise.

The Methodist Church is exploring how its land, buildings and resources might contribute more effectively to addressing the housing and homelessness crisis. Today is an opportunity to listen to experiences, challenges, ideas and hopes.

There are no right or wrong answers. We are not seeking agreement. We simply want to learn from the experiences and wisdom of those present.

Please respect different viewpoints and allow everyone the opportunity to contribute."

Ground Rules (5 minutes)

Invite agreement to the following:

- Listen respectfully.
- One person speaks at a time.
- Share from personal experience.
- Be concise to allow others to contribute.
- Disagree respectfully.
- Maintain confidentiality where appropriate.

Opening Devotion (Optional) (5 minutes)

Listening Question 1

What have been the barriers to using church land and buildings for housing?

Time: 20 minutes

Facilitator Prompts

If discussion stalls, ask:

- Have you been involved in a housing project?
- What challenges did you encounter?
- Were the barriers financial?
- Were processes difficult to understand?
- Were there governance or legal challenges?
- Did local opposition affect progress?
- Were there concerns about risk?
- Did knowledge or expertise feel lacking?
- If you haven't been involved in a housing project, what are the barriers to your church or circuit considering affordable or supported housing as an option for

buildings you no longer need or for sites that could be redeveloped with a housing association partner.

Group similar answers together under themes such as:

- Finance
- Governance and Legal
- Property issues
- Planning
- Skills and expertise
- Risk
- Capacity
- Theology or vision

Capture and record specific examples, frequently mentioned barriers and significant stories

Listening Question 2

What needs to change?

Time: 20 minutes

Facilitator Prompts

What would make housing projects easier?

What policies should be reviewed?

Where are decisions taking too long?

What practical changes would make the greatest difference?

What would encourage more churches to explore housing?

Activity

Ask participants to imagine:

"If we could remove three obstacles tomorrow, what would they be?"

Record responses and capture look for recurring themes such as simplified processes, new guidance, better support, streamlined approvals, access to funding, stronger partnerships

Listening Question 3

What support do Methodists require to use Methodist land and buildings for housing as a way of tackling the housing and homelessness crisis?

Time: 20 minutes

Facilitator Prompts

Explore different types of support:

- Financial support
- Professional advice
- Property expertise
- Project management
- Development partners
- Legal advice
- Training
- Spiritual encouragement
- Peer learning and mentoring

Activity: Ask participants:

"If your church wanted to start exploring housing next month, what support would you need first?"

Capture and Separate responses into Local church needs, Circuit needs, District needs

Listening Question 4

If the barriers to using church land and buildings for affordable and social housing were removed, what difference could this make to being a justice-seeking church in your community?

Time: 20 minutes

Facilitator prompts

Encourage participants to think broadly:

- How might lives change?
- How could communities benefit?
- What impact might there be on homelessness?
- What new ministry opportunities could emerge?
- How might this strengthen the church's witness?

Activity

Invite groups to complete the sentence:

"If housing barriers disappeared, our church or circuit could..."

Record all responses. Capture and note examples of:

- Community transformation
- Justice and social action
- Mission opportunities
- Partnerships
- Support for vulnerable people
- Long-term local impact

Final Reflection (10 minutes)

Ask participants:

"What is one key message you would like the Housing Memorial Working Group to hear?"

Go around the room and invite one brief response from each participant.

Closing

Facilitator Script

"Thank you for sharing your experiences and ideas. Your contributions will help the Housing Memorial Working Group understand the barriers churches face, identify what support is needed, and develop recommendations for the future."

Offer a short prayer

Note-Taking Template

Church/Circuit/District:

Facilitator:

Date:

Number of Participants:

Question 1: Barriers

Key themes:

Important quotes:

Question 2: What needs to change?

Key themes:

Important quotes:

Question 3: Support required

Key themes:

Important quotes:

Question 4: Difference this could make

Key themes:

Important quotes:

Additional Comments

Stories or Case Studies Shared

Key messages that the group would like the Housing Memorial Group to hear

Return notes of the listening exercise to housing@methodistchurch.org.uk