At the New Life Project in Huddersfield we are beginning a project asking three questions.

1. What is community?

2. What do you like about where you live?

3. What do you not like about where you live?

This will be the beginning of what we hope will be an exhibition of oral stories, art work and video that can be shared with all the people in Huddersfield. This is to promote understanding of who we are and where we live and to dispel myths and rumours, which can lead to misunderstanding and misinformation.

We have been given a small amount of funding to begin this project and started by recording children’s answers to the above questions. The children from a local primary school answered these questions after the Deputy Head did an assembly asking: ‘what is a community’?

In September we are going to do some art work with the children in Moldgreen Church.

We are planning to widen the project and speak to a variety of people of all ages, plus professionals who work in our community - GP, Police, Community Link Worker etc. The idea is that we will have oral answers to our questions, art work, video and other ideas that can make an exhibition about our communities, produced by all the community.

What is interesting so far is the difference between what the children see and experience and what adults think they see and experience.

I attended a multi-disciplinary meeting with members of the community and, what was interesting to observe was what people who work in the area thought, as opposed to what people who live in the area think is happening.
One of the skills I think we are losing, is the ability to listen and respect each other’s perspective. Amidst all the rhetoric and sound bites and statistics, we are missing the point that this is where people live. One of the year 5/6 students said: ‘We are not a number, we are people.’

Huddersfield, like many other places, has challenges, but we are trying in a small way to get to know each other’s opinions and ideas and to look at how we can develop our communities. Amongst the challenges there is also laughter. Putting a voice recorder in front of year 5/6 children, they were silent and just looked at each other. Their teacher said that was the quietest they had ever been!! But when they realised it was their voices and thoughts we wanted, the silence gradually became a conversation with giggling and sharing.

So, in time I will let you know what has happened to the idea!! I am sure over time we will introduce different ideas and perspectives and as we listen and talk to each other, it may develop into something more than originally planned, but I hope it will develop alongside the listening and understanding that we are beginning to have by just asking the questions and documenting the answers.

What is interesting is that the Year 5/6 pupils are concerned about all the homeless people they see, so the school is going to talk about being homeless. Ideas are always changing and developing in our project in Huddersfield. That is what makes it challenging, interesting, exciting.

Galatians 6 Vs 9 “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we don’t give up”.