



Place, Community and Connection in the Fens

Research study: what matters to you about where you live?

Commissioned by:
The Open University
Open Societal Challenges

The Open University are leading this research, exploring your experience of place, community and connection in the place you live in the Fens.

This leaflet provides you with further information about the study.

The Open University is a British public research university. We design, carry out, and analyse, research studies in a wide range of fields, including areas of the social sciences like the politics and geography of the United Kingdom.

The Team:

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This research project has been reviewed by, and received a favourable opinion, from The Open University Human Research Ethics Committee – HREC reference number HREC/ 2024-0102-3

What is the aim of this research?

We are asking for your help with important research about Residents' Experiences of Borders and Place in Eastern England. This Open University research aims to explore how individuals in the Fens region, particularly in Boston, Wisbech, and Peterborough, experience and perceive issues related to place, infrastructure, community, connection and identity. We seek to understand the impact of these factors on social cohesion, participation, and integration within these communities. We aim to produce a report, book chapter and a short film aimed at local and national government decision-makers.

What is involved?

We are interested in finding out the experiences of residents who have lived and worked in this region. Your views will help us to understand the local challenges and opportunities and will contribute to policymaking to improve services and community life for residents of the area.

For the project, we would like to arrange with you:

- 1 x 1-hour interview
- 2 x 2-hour focus groups with 4-6 others
- 1 x simple reflective task at home, involving a simple question to reflect on and produce a short answer in a format that suits you (e.g. email, letter, poem)

You will be welcome to take part in as much or as little of these activities as you like. The interview and groups will be recorded so that we can correctly remember everything that you tell us. We will work around you to arrange an accessible venue in your area and at a time convenient to you, and they can be held in-person or online as you prefer. We will then hold follow-on discussion groups, some in-person, others online for those who cannot make an in-person event.

What will I be asked?

We will ask you to talk about the following broad topics:

- Your personal experiences and views about living in your area, particularly regarding place, community, connection and infrastructure.
- What you see as the opportunities, strengths, challenges and priorities for your area
- How residents can work with local and national government, and voluntary and community groups to best work together to build on those strengths and take your priorities forward.

Do I have to take part?

No. We are relying on your voluntary co-operation. No one is taking part in this study who does not want to. Even if you say yes to begin with, you are free to withdraw at any time by contacting Dan Taylor (dan.taylor@open.ac.uk or 01908 655299) up to 31 December 2024, when it is anticipated that the anonymised data will be published, without needing to give a reason.

If you do decide to take part in the interview and discussion groups, we will give you £25 Amazon voucher to compensate you for your time. You will receive these on the day. We can also cover any travel expenses you may incur attending the interview or discussion group in person. Interviews will take place February, March and April at dates to be agreed with you, and focus groups in April, May and June.

Is it confidential?

Yes. Everything that you tell the interviewer will be in confidence. No personal information will be passed to anyone outside the research team. We will write a report and book chapter of the study but no individual will be identifiable from the published results of the research.

What happens now?

We will contact you again soon to ask for your consent to take part in the research and to arrange an appointment to meet either in-person at one of the listed community venues or online on Microsoft Teams. In the meantime, if you have any queries at all about the study, please contact Dan Taylor

– by email (dan.taylor@open.ac.uk)

– or by telephone 01908 655299

What if I have other questions?

If you have any other questions, we would be happy to answer them. Please contact Dan Taylor via the contact details above.

For any complaints or issues, please contact Professor Simon Usherwood, Director of Research, POLIS, The Open University: simon.usherwood@open.ac.uk.