I'm currently looking for families living on low-to-middle incomes in Cullercoats and on the Marden estate to interview. Interviews will focus on your experiences of the current recession and your relationships within the local community.

Interviews can take place with one or more family members and can be arranged at a time and place that suits you.

If you are interested, please do get in touch and I will send you more information about what is involved.

**Getting in Touch**

**Getting involved**

If you live in Cullercoats or on the Marden estate, think you belong to the ‘squeezed middle’, and are interested in being interviewed, please contact me by email, phone or text.

Mobile: 07580 386874
Email: alison.stenning@ncl.ac.uk

**Finding out more**

Updates and more information about the project can be found at:

blogs.ncl.ac.uk/alisonstenning

www.facebook.com/researchingcullercoats

Twitter: @alisonstenning
What is this research about?

Some say that in our global world, local communities are becoming less important. Yet, as many individuals and families are struggling with the effects of recession, it seems that these local, personal relationships, and the support they offer, are becoming important again. This research tries to explore this question in Cullercoats and on the Marden estate.

I’m particularly interested in exploring whether our relationships with family, friends and neighbours help us to deal with economic uncertainty. This might be through the moral support they offer, or because they give us time, or money, or other kinds of help that make it easier for us to get by.

The North East has been hit especially hard by the effects of recession and austerity (such as job loss, pay squeezes, benefits reductions, service cuts). Within the region, the ‘squeezed middle’ (low-to-middle income households, with a total income of roughly £12,000 to £40,000) has been particularly vulnerable.

Cullercoats and the Marden estate are home to a significant number of these households. They have dense and long-standing networks of community relationships and a relatively well-defined identity. All of this means this is a good place to explore the questions I’m interested in.

To explore these questions, it is important to me to first get to know Cullercoats and the Marden estate well. I want to get a sense of the life and history of the communities and to find out what is important to people living there.

The next step will be to carry out interviews with individuals and families in Cullercoats and on the Marden estate. These will involve discussions of the recession and of everyday relationships, with friends and family.

Why am I doing this research?

I believe the question of how individuals and families are living with the effects of the recession is an extremely important one and I think that people’s relationships with each other have a real influence on how they deal with economic stress. I have a young daughter, I work part-time and I live on the coast so these issues are personally important to me too.

Who is funding it?

Newcastle University, through their Catherine Cookson Foundation. The University has a longstanding relationship with Cullercoats through the Dove Marine Laboratory and is keen to support research that connects to the lives of local communities. Of course, Catherine Cookson herself was very interested in communities like Cullercoats.

Who will use the research?

Most importantly, this research will, I hope, be the beginning of a long-term relationship with Cullercoats, one that allows me to research issues that are important to people who live there. So I plan to feed what I find out back to the people I interviewed, including to those working in institutions that support community life. I will also be writing blogs and papers to present at conferences and to publish in academic journals.

How will any information you share be used?

In all meetings and interviews, I will discuss and agree how the information will be used. If you would like it to be anonymised before it is used in presentations or publications, we can agree that. All material gathered in interviews and meetings will be stored safely. I will be the only person who has access to it.