

## Enquiry 6a: Teacher research guide

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### Developing an effective local history enquiry

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#### 1. The online Suffrage Database

The first port of call for information should be the online database of suffrage activity. Searching 'Birth Town', 'Birth Region' and 'Petition Region' should throw up some local names to follow up. Once you have names, you can use local census and trade directories, and other sources, to fill out the details.

[www.suffrageresources.org.uk/database](http://www.suffrageresources.org.uk/database)

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#### 2. Local newspapers – current and historical

Try using the British Newspaper Archive as a starting point – they may have copies of your local newspapers. The 'local studies collection' of your local library will almost certainly have microfiche copies of old local newspapers to search. Make your life simpler by searching suitable dates – for example, dates around local election meetings with national speakers that might have been disrupted by local suffragettes. Don't forget to keep an eye on the local press today, as there are many stories of 'forgotten' suffragettes appearing to mark the centenary.

<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>

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#### 3. Record offices/local history collections

The local record office will know of any notable collections and may well have a publication on the topic. Failing that, any local collections around 1900–1914 will contain references to local activity. Archivists are usually very busy, so you might need to be quite specific about what you are looking for before approaching them! They might, at first, seem scary but they are usually happy to help. A simple Google search will help you to locate your local or county record office. Some councils also run a local heritage centre. It is worth investigating through your council website. Don't forget also your local university archive.

#### 4. Local history society

Someone in the local history society will have knowledge of local events at the time or may well have researched and written on the topic. Many societies will have used 'National Lottery' grants to produce pamphlets and trails to mark the centenary. Some, like Bristol, have produced an extensive online 'Votes for Women' resource.

**Know Your Place map:** <https://arcg.is/1rOCXq>

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#### 5. Local museums

An essential port of call! There may be exhibitions or collections of artefacts on display, or even stored inaccessible. They may even be grateful for your students helping to catalogue such items.

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#### 6. Internet

You can get remote-free access to the 'Oxford Dictionary of National Biography' via any local library. Here you might find detailed biographies of notable local suffrage activists. 'Image' searches will also find copies of old photographs, postcards, etc., showing events at the time. BBC Local News and its archive is also a useful place to look for relevant stories and leads.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/informationandarchives/archivenews/>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/localnews>

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#### 7. Books and diaries

A trawl of local second-hand bookshops or your local library's local studies collection will often reveal locally published books and pamphlets of help. Many active suffragists left memoirs or wrote books. Academics have produced detailed studies of the fight for the vote. A quick search of contents and indexes might discover more about people and events you have come across.

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#### 8. Statues, memorials and blue plaques

Are there any 'blue plaques' in your area commemorating events at the time? You can find out who runs your local plaques scheme by consulting the list in the following link. For those in London, it is run by English Heritage.

<https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/siteassets/home/visit/blue-plaques/propose-plaque/other-plaque-schemes.pdf>

Or perhaps there might be statues or memorials?  
(Very few local statues are of females, and even fewer remember suffragists and suffragettes!)

This might initially seem a daunting list, and many of your searches might come up blank. The excitement of a local study is that you really don't know what you might discover until you start. Lincolnshire was not exactly a hotbed of suffragist and suffragette activity, but there was enough to make the enquiry worthwhile.

You might prefer to undertake the initial research on your own, or to involve some or all of your students – perhaps as a 'history club' activity. And, of course, the result will be truly original history.