

A guide for partnership working at parish/local level

As churches increasingly respond to the needs and challenges of poverty, isolation and marginalisation in our society, it is an important part of our Christian witness to work **responsibly, respectfully and relevantly** in relation not only to those whose lives we pray will be transformed, but also with partners and others of goodwill who are active around us and with us.

This brief guide will hopefully help churches to be more effective in their mission.

Two routes, one guide

1. Vision/mission need and opportunity emerging from within church community
2. External charity/para-church organisation/other fellowship approaches the local church with ideas/resources/templates for action

There can be a tendency for churches/Christian groups to work in isolation. This can lead at best to overlap with existing work and at worst to frustration, anger and mistrust from others at the way Christians ignore or compete with good work already happening.

We should recognise that many non-Christian voluntary bodies are doing God's work, they're part of God doing His mission (Missio Dei) that ++Rowan encouraged us to join in with.

We witness by the way we relate/consult/work with others. This is not an optional extra but should be central to Anglican mission at parish, deanery and diocesan levels.

Getting started/re-launching

Pray, look and listen

1. Prayer is at the heart of discerning God's will for a parish's mission priorities
2. Look around – know your church, know your neighbourhood – what are the needs and issues that God is calling us to respond to?

Use existing resources to help you to see (don't rely on or be motivated by one case or anecdote) – e.g. Church Urban Fund research, Spotlight, local authority information on child poverty, employment, housing need; Framework stats

3. Listen to others. Listen to other churches/faith groups what are they doing in your area?
Listen to the wider voluntary sector – CVS, Advice Nottingham, CAB
Listen to local councillors/ the police/school leaders – what do they say?

Action: to do and not to do

Having prayed, looked, and listened what next?

1. Do ask one of the Diocesan Partnership's Team to meet with church leaders/PCC to get another perspective/share good practice from elsewhere in the diocese
2. Do encourage church members to volunteer/join in with existing work whether run by other churches or secular bodies – don't underestimate the impact this can have
3. Do discern where there are gaps in provision and seek to fill them, in consultation with other local partners
4. Do not set up in competition with existing provision/project e.g. Foodbank around the corner already exists
5. Do not give the impression that nothing else is happening when it is (even if and especially if it's a non-Christian led project)
6. Do not seek publicity which undermines and demeans or ignores partners
7. Do not seek a quick and easy fix especially if an external offer brings resources, volunteers and a ready-made plan

Outcomes

Joining together in the transforming mission of God is about outcomes which sees lives, communities, and the world changed for the better.

Whatever we do has to be sustainable, otherwise we will be seen as yet another 'organisation' who pulls out, leaving those on the margins feeling more stigmatised & even more excluded.

'Faithful capital'/trust can take a long time to build up but not long to pull down.

We're carriers of too precious a Gospel to allow that to happen – let us really be good news in the way Jesus showed us.

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