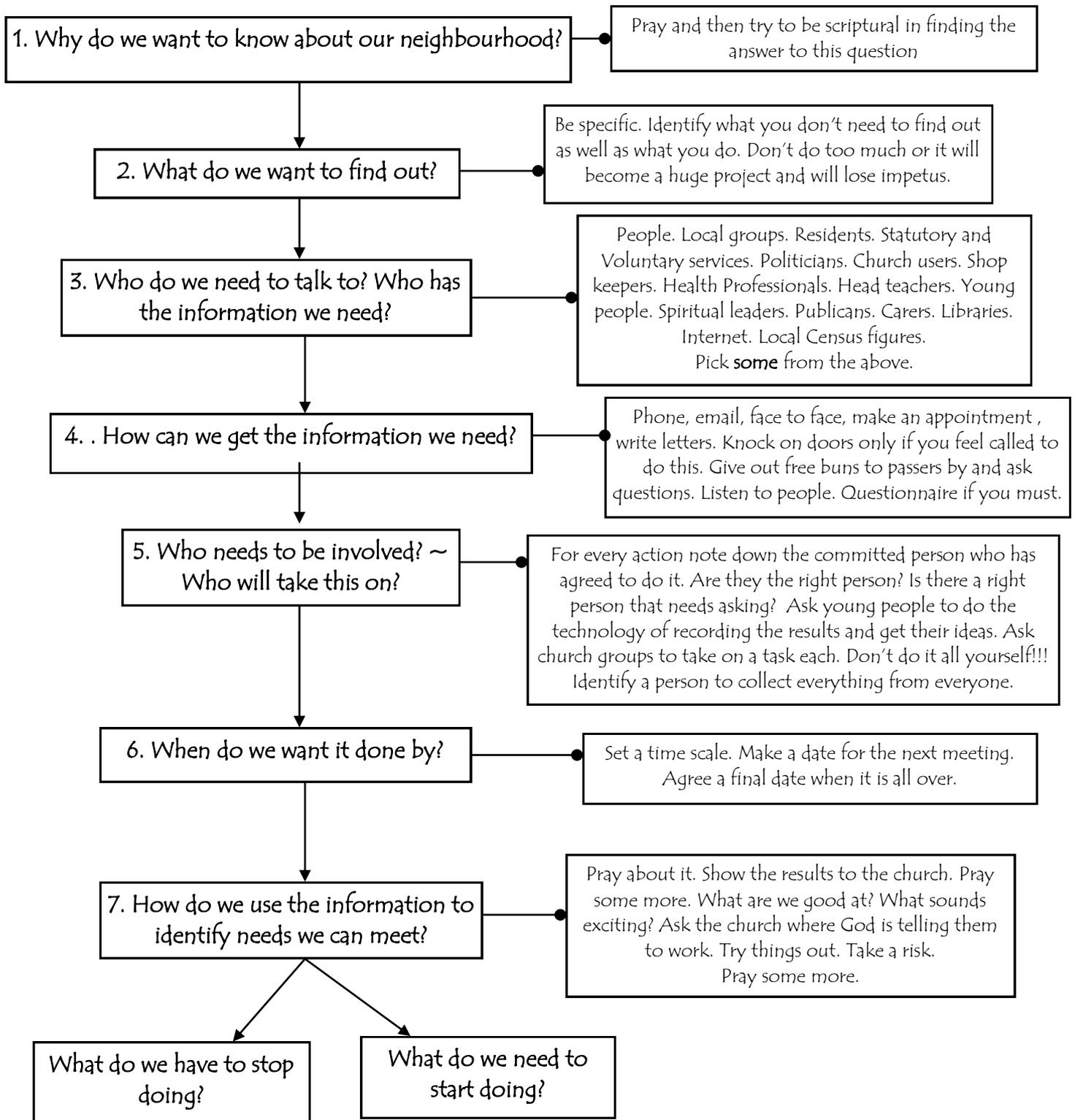


Discovering Our Communities

A church who wishes to find out what God wants them to do in their neighbourhood will build a diverse group of committed people to meet together and follow the flowchart to build a plan of action.



Examples of information gathering tasks follow as suggestions only. It depends on the church, the situation and the answer to the question "What do we need to find out?" above.

1. Geography

- Get a map of the locality. Estate Agents? Ordnance Survey on line at (www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk). Buy one. Google maps.
- Decide the area you want to cover and mark on the map.
- Mark on significant places. Other churches. Schools. Health services. Anything else of interest.
- Walk the area making notes and taking photos.
- Make map and photos into a display to put up in the church
- Invite congregation to put a sticker on the map where they live.

2. Statistics

- Get local area census data from www.Neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk
- Population density; marital status; household makeup; housing tenure; HE qualifications; occupations; cars per household; employment/unemployment/part time employment; working from home; women caring for families; other full time carers; level of occupation; types of economic activity eg manufacturing, agriculture etc.; long term illness and more.....
- Just using the information of interest, display as easy to see charts (get a young person to do it) in colour for the congregation to see.

3. Education and Childcare

- Identify all schools and colleges in local area. See www.schools-search.co.uk
- Identify toddler groups, after school clubs, nurseries, carers groups, youth clubs etc at <http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/childcare>
- See if the information is useful. Is there a gap in provision in your area?
- See if any local schools would be worth approaching to build links.
- Ask the children and young people in your church to describe their schools/colleges in a short write up

4. Other places of worship

- Identify other churches in your area. How well are they known? Ask your Minister if they have good contacts there and to find out useful information about the role each other church has in the community. E.g. do they run Scouts? Youth club? Toddler group? Soup kitchen? So you don't try to do what is already happening.
- Identify other religious groups in your area. Do they have a good relationship with your church? Talk to your Minister about them to build a picture of the inter-faith and inter-denominational relations.

5. Problems/Concerns/Needs

- Ask the congregation to fill in an anonymous short questionnaire which asks if they have any concerns or worries about health, finances, care, support or their neighbourhood for themselves or anyone they know.
- Contact the local Health Visitors to ask for an appointment to talk to someone about local provisions generally to find out what support services there are and what is missing.
- Similarly, contact local police to identify areas of concern for crime or safety in your neighbourhood
- Again, make an appointment to talk to Social Services about any concerns they have for local needs, care, support, unemployment, homelessness or mental health services

6. Local amenities

- What facilities are there in the locality for leisure, pastimes, entertainment?
- What local agencies are already there working to meet local needs?
- What do local people like about this area? And dislike?
- Ask locals and observe the area by walking around at different times of the day to build a picture of the way things happen.
- Is there anything missing?

6. Prayer

- When all the information has been collected, collated and displayed (only that which is interesting! Or there will be information overload) organise a week of prayer for the church
- Give each member of the congregation a prayer timetable with the various topics from the displays allocated a day or time each day to be prayed for by individuals at home.
- Hold prayer meetings of half an hour at different times on different days so everyone can get to one during the week.
- Pray around the displays and ask God for guidance
- Invite all to identify needs that the church could begin to investigate to take forward

7. Action

- The group identifies what the church needs to stop doing
- The group identifies one or two community needs that could be addressed by the church.
- Contact organisations or professionals who can help and support these projects
- Draw up an action plan to carry out the work
- Take the proposals to Church Council for agreement
- Identify, support and empower the right people to do the work
- Set a time scale for review
- ACTION!
- If it doesn't work. STOP IT. And try something else!

Possibilities

- ♥ Health/Baby clinic
- ♥ Food Bank (<http://www.trusselltrust.org>)
- ♥ Carers Support
- ♥ Toddler group
- ♥ Soup Kitchen
- ♥ Luncheon Club
- ♥ Credit Union
- ♥ CAP (Christians Against Poverty) <http://www.capuk.org/> for help with debt
- ♥ Furniture recycling/renovation
- ♥ Day centre
- ♥ Café and drop in
- ♥ Coffee mornings with prayer cards for people to fill in
- ♥ After school clubs
- ♥ Breakfast clubs
- ♥ Youth Club
- ♥ Holiday club
- ♥ Nursery
- ♥ Art and Craft afternoons
- ♥ Gourmet evenings
- ♥ Thrift Shop
- ♥ Gardening team
- ♥ Allotments
- ♥ Prayer
- ♥ Hospitality
- ♥ Offer Conference facilities
- ♥ Offer offices to local groups
- ♥ Training sessions
- ♥ Prayer centre
- ♥ Pamper sessions
- ♥ Body, Mind and Spirit sessions
- ♥ Chaplaincy project