



Local Group Starter Pack



2nd edition 2018

INTRODUCTION

Meeting together is a vital part of our discipleship as doctors and nurses who are called to be Christ-like in a culture that is increasingly dismissive of, and at times hostile to the gospel.

We hope that you will find this a useful source of encouragement and ideas for finding, joining or establishing doctor & nurse fellowship groups around the UK.

“Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

Hebrews 10:23-25

AIMS

The aims of Local Groups are based on those of the Christian Medical Fellowship (CMF):

Discipleship - to unite Christian doctors and medical students in Christ and encourage them to deepen their faith, live like Christ and serve him obediently, particularly through acting competently and with compassion in their medical practice.

Evangelism - to encourage Christian doctors and medical students to be witnesses for Christ amongst all those they meet.

Mission - to mobilise and support all Christian doctors, medical students and other health care students and professionals, in serving Christ throughout the world.

Values - to promote Christian values in society, especially, but not limited to, the areas of bioethics and healthcare.

OBJECTIVES

Local groups are a forum to:

- Provide fellowship and mutual support, encouragement and challenge
- Consider issues and challenges specific to Christians in medicine
- Augment the national CMF Welcome Scheme that matches FY1s with a more senior colleague for support and friendship
- Resource us for evangelism amongst colleagues
- Consider the opportunities for international and transcultural medical mission

PRINCIPLES

While local church fellowship is vital, there's *unique* value in getting together with others who face similar workplace challenges and share a common societal role. With each other there are no false illusions about the title 'doctor', and there can be enormous benefits from our common experiences of training and practice.

The principles we suggest for anyone leading or hosting meetings are these:

Benefit - There will always be some cost in terms of time, travel, and other competing priorities, but there should be net gain: a sense afterwards of 'That was well worth it!' Our God (who gives every harvest) is the pourer of the good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over (Luke 6:38). Meeting together we can talk about our work with each other, in confidence and within the family of faith. On the other hand if folk are coming 'in order to keep the group going' out of a misplaced sense of duty, then meetings become an end in themselves, and pointless.

Relationship - For most of us there are just too many meetings (noun) nowadays. But 'meeting' as a *verb* is quite another matter. You can be in frequent distant contact through texts, tweets, Facebook or email, but still feel isolated. At a Local Group we're there to interact with, encounter and *meet* each other, building interdependent and mutually supportive relationships. And leadership itself should be 'in fellowship', with at least a couple of people sharing responsibility.

Sustainability - Beware setting your sights too high at first, but start as you're happy to continue in terms of frequency and content. As above, don't go it alone - at least two responsible makes it so much easier to organise hosting, catering and preparation, run an email list of regulars, and share triumphs and frustrations. And do let us know if we can help in the office with publicity to the members in your area, or arrange for a visiting speaker to lead or facilitate discussion.

Flexibility - What's called for is whatever best serves the local membership with regard to timing and frequency, activities, location and catering - one size doesn't fit all.

WHO?

CMF medical and nursing members and believing or enquiring colleagues. The local membership profile will determine the make-up of each group with regards to age and medical specialties - whether you're inner-city, close to a local hospital with juniors in training, suburban, or rural.

Some local groups deliberately prioritise support of doctors in training, focusing on supper together (the historic 'Open House' model); none should neglect colleagues at any stage in life, including retirement. (From the perspective of a pressurised job, retirement might seem like an enviable and distant dream, but of course it brings its own unique trials and challenges).

Meetings can include local medical students and colleagues from allied health professions to mutual advantage - provided the core needs of the working doctor and nurse aren't neglected. Spouses often add a welcome perspective, and a group having a social event with families included - such as a summer barbecue - is also well worthwhile.

WHEN?

Most Local Group meetings are on weekday evenings - either the same day of the week or alternating between two; we'd suggest once a month at most, three times a year at least. Mondays and Thursdays often work well, avoiding as they do most local church small group meetings. 7pm is usually the earliest practicable time to start for members coming from work, and suitable if a meal is to be provided, while 8pm is the latest realistic start time. In terms of winding up, 10pm is the latest *anyone* should normally be hosting visitors!

A suggested format from 7pm, including a meal, is:

20 minutes: refreshments and chat
60 minutes: supper
40 minutes: talk / presentation and discussion
20 minutes: prayer
10 minutes: refreshments and chat

Starting later eg at 8pm the timetable could be:

20 minutes: refreshments and chat
40 minutes: talk / presentation and discussion
20 minutes: prayer
20 minutes: refreshments and chat

Planned timings nearly always slip - beware being robbed of time for prayer ministry.

WHERE?

An accessible location is vital, so consider public transport as well as road links. A fixed venue means one less variable to organise, but some groups work very well meeting at different homes in rotation - provided everyone is informed in good time.

A home is the ideal venue of course, but local church or surgery premises may be the most convenient in some instances. NHS premises can be ideal for gatherings of Christian hospital staff, provided such meetings are agreed in advance with management.

WHAT?

Options for discussion or a prepared talk include:

- thematic Bible study with relevant applications drawn out; eg healing / service / evangelism / teaching / mentoring.
- ethical theme eg euthanasia / social justice / boundaries / gene therapy / accountability / abortion / rights and responsibilities / research. CMF *Files* available from www.cmf.org.uk/publications/content.asp?context=issue&id=18 are invaluable for pre-reading & discussion.
- cultural or social theme, eg medicine in film or literature / history of healthcare / complementary and alternative therapies / health economics / developing world healthcare / secularisation.
- medicine and life themes eg work-life balance / health / marriage & family / workplace relationships / cynicism / working abroad / retirement / sabbaticals / finances / organisational theory / stress resilience / boundaries / sharing faith.

Alternatively you may find more beneficial an *ad hoc* pastoral time, with members sharing their current situations and prayer ministry following.

It can be useful for those leading to give a brief update on CMF events and developments both locally and nationally, and local church or para-church activities.

With regard to catering, some groups will meet over a meal, but for others just hot beverages with biscuits or cake are more practicable.

GETTING STARTED

1. Finding a group near you

This can be done through the CMF website:
www.cmf.org.uk/doctors/cmf-local-contacts/

These groups are listed in regions and are regularly updated but if there is none close to you, please contact graduates@cmf.org.uk in case we are aware of a group not yet named.

2. Starting a group near you

If there is no nearby Local Group and you would like to consider starting one, we would be more than happy to help support you with this.

Send us the details about your plans and what you need help with (graduates@cmf.org.uk). Once established, we will put your group on the database so that others new to the region will be able to find you.

PRACTICAL TIPS

PUBLICITY

Advertise the group as widely as possible (and with the prior agreement of any relevant authorities) - in local hospitals, doctors' messes, postgraduate centres, medical school, churches and via word of mouth through from local Christian medics.

Regional Team Leaders and Links can all email those in their 'constituency' using lists generated from our database, once logged in to the website.

GROWTH

The Links scheme, connecting every member with their Regional Team Leader and (where present) their Local, Workplace and Church Links, provides the skeleton for networking and building relationships.

In addition the open webpages allow anyone to see what Link roles are established in your region and in all other CMF regions, aiming to support members before and during any home or work relocation.

Probably the most important way of reaching non-member colleagues is through existing members of the group inviting along Christians they meet at their own places of work.

[Catalyst Teams](#) are being established across the UK which will mean we can start and support local groups more effectively.