



Scheme Description

September 2018 Intake

Introduction

The church-based intern scheme seeks to assist churches who want to develop a biblical counselling approach to ministry.

Where a local church has identified an individual with training and gifting in biblical counselling, this scheme provides a framework to support that person's development and the development of their ministry.

A brief description of a biblical counselling approach to ministry can be found in the application pack.

Who is it for?

Those wishing to apply to the scheme are invited to submit an application outlining plans for the development of biblical counselling locally. This description of the proposed ministry (which may be more or less detailed depending on circumstances), must be written in collaboration with their church leader(s) who would then complete the second part of the application form.

Suitable applicants will normally have completed the certificate programme offered by Biblical Counselling UK or have equivalent training and experience.

Why is such a scheme needed?

With biblical counselling is still relatively new to the UK, this scheme aims to help churches discover the benefits of a biblical counselling approach. We hope the scheme will provide an impetus that will lead to greater investment locally in due course.

While the availability of suitable support and supervision remains limited, the scheme will help provide develop a network linking those new to biblical counselling with those who have more experience. It will also help in the development of peer group support.

What are the benefits for the individual, and for the church?

Many churches recognise that the resources they have to help people with 'problems of daily living' are more limited than they would wish. This scheme seeks to develop local resources and foster a culture within the local church that mobilises the body of Christ in 'one-anothering' ministry. Rather than being the sole focus for biblical counselling ministry, we hope the intern will be a catalyst to foster richer and wiser pastoral care right across the church family. In some cases an intern might also support the provision of training events to stimulate an interest in biblical counselling ministries in other local churches as well.

For some individuals the main benefit of the scheme will be the opportunity to gain further experience in biblical counselling ministry. This experience will be put to use in whatever future formal or informal ministry roles they might take on. In other cases, however, one or more local churches might decide to provide ongoing funding that would allow the individual to develop their role further into the future.

Where needed, Biblical Counselling UK is able to offer churches grants to support the expenses of an intern. Grants will usually match the funding a local church is providing, and be payable for two years.

What other benefits are there?

Each intern is linked with a mentor who has experience in pastoral ministry (usually a member of the Biblical Counselling UK executive committee) who provides encouragement in the trainee's personal development. Pastoral responsibility, however, remains firmly with local church leadership. Input from the intern's mentor does not seek to replace or undermine local pastoral responsibility.

We also provide a peer support group where interns meet, either electronically or in person, to provide mutual encouragement and as a stimulus to further reading and study. Discussion of pastoral situations respects the confidentiality of those involved.

We ask interns to be involved in Biblical Counselling UK's annual residential conference and regional conferences and, where possible, to visit a local centre where the Certificate course is being taught to describe the intern scheme to students currently taking the course.

What would having an Intern look like for the church?

Rather than having a 'one-size-fits-all' approach, internships adapt to local situations and can therefore reflect the strengths and experience of each particular intern. While an internship may involve establishing new ministries, often the focus will be on improving existing ministries rather than starting something new.

Instead of allowing themselves to become a focus for pastoral work, we encourage interns to help their church improve the quality of pastoral care across the entire body of Christ. This would mean facilitating training with groups and individuals both to develop a vision for biblical counselling ministry and help the development of personal skills. Where an intern has sufficient experience they might also be a point of reference for more complicated life difficulties, either by the direct provision of help or by supporting those already doing so.

Where an internship works well, we expect a vision for richer personal ministry to develop across the church. As more individuals learn that God would have them move toward others in their difficulties and as 'one-anothering' becomes a more routine part of discipleship, we hope the culture of church life will begin to change.

Though some interns might be capable of supporting those with complex difficulties (persistent depression, eating disorders, alcohol dependency, etc), this will not always be the case. Interns will often be helping the church identify and engage biblically with the sort of problems we all face (grumbling, social anxiety, bitterness, irritability, overworking, fear of man, etc.).

The work of an intern should be intimately connected to the life of the local church. An internship that is working well will be fully integrated into the church's existing pastoral care. It will support and augment that pastoral care, not function as a replacement for it or run in parallel to it.

What would being an Intern look like?

The precise role will vary from place to place, but most interns will provide biblical counselling and train others. Their ministry to individuals might happen in the context of an established church-based counselling ministry but usually it will be part of the church's ordinary pastoral care.

We encourage the provision of training courses for members of local churches. It may be possible to make these courses available to other churches in the local area.

Each intern will need a local supervisor with responsibility for their supervision and accountability. This is normally provided by the church's pastoral leadership team, but might occasionally be delegated to another suitably experienced member of the church. The local supervisor will liaise with the intern's mentor as required.

Ongoing support

Interns meet regularly with their local supervisor who has pastoral responsibility for them. Meetings with their mentor are less frequent and the mentor normally produces short written reports summarising their reflections on the interns work and development. To ensure good communication, this report is made available both to the intern and the local supervisor so that it can inform local supervision.

What is the application process?

Our conviction that God chooses to pastor his people in the context of the local church means we want the local church to be fully involved in the process of applying for an intern. Normally, someone interested in becoming an intern approaches their church leadership to discuss the idea and if the church is supportive they would then work jointly on an application. We are happy to respond to enquiries and help the church leadership decide the particular form the internship should take. We do not expect, or require, the church leadership to feel fully informed about biblical counselling or provide a local supervisor who was informed about biblical counselling. One of the main benefits of an internship is helping a church, and its leadership, to learn more about a biblical counselling approach to ministry.

The application form invites a description of the joint vision for the intern and in particular their plans for local accountability. We ask for details of two referees who could speak to the spiritual gifts and maturity of the applicant. There is also a due diligence form which the senior pastor of the church will need to complete.

Concerns about confidentiality, competence and liability (insurance)

These interns will not be 'accredited counsellors' and we do not encourage them to describe themselves as 'biblical counsellors'. Those receiving support from the interns should not imagine they are receiving some form of professional secular counselling. They should expect to receive wise and godly counsel but this would not be counselling that falls under the umbrella of any authorising body other than their local church. Biblical Counselling UK will provide a mentor to support the intern in their spiritual, personal and pastoral development, but this will not provide any formal or legal accountability for their work. The mentor will discuss individual pastoral situations, but pastoral responsibility will remain with the local church.

The different labels used in this area (Christian counselling, pastoral care and biblical counselling, to name but a few) can be confusing and can produce concern over legal responsibilities. Biblical Counselling UK does not define biblical counselling as a professional service or the activity of experts. We use the label 'biblical counselling' to describe the provision of wise counsel to a person who is seeking help and wishes that help to be founded on a biblical understanding of life. This is part of the normal work of pastoral care within a church community and, as such, we do not

understand it to require special insurance arrangements any more than a youth worker or community pastoral worker does.

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