PEER CELLS
Introduction

Purpose

In order to interact with peers who engaged in the programme, Arrow participants meet twice between each residential in a small peer cell, as well as on each residential.

There are three aims:

- To provide mutual support and accountability during Arrow.
- To offer a place to reflect and engage with peers on what God is doing in your lives.
- To pray for and with one another.

For each module there are suggested questions you can explore to help with your meeting. They are a guide to help you reflect on what you're learning and experiencing through Arrow.

Some of you may already be in cells with other people. Please don't stop these, although you may want to meet slightly less regularly. The Arrow cell is a short-term (18 month) group specifically designed to help you get the most from Arrow.

Guiding Principles

- **Be honest** It is amazing how easy it is to hide, even within a group designed to help us talk about the real 'me'. No one will force anything out of you, so choose to be honest.
- **Be vulnerable** There is always the danger of being hurt when we are vulnerable, but the benefits can be extraordinary.
- **Be committed** Everyone in the cell is likely to be a busy person, and there will always be the temptation to cry off from the meeting because of busyness. Our advice? DON'T! The cell will work best when everyone is committed to attending.
- **Be prayerful** Try to pray regularly for the other members of your cell.
- **Be aware** Most groups go through an initial period when all seems well, and then hit some difficulties. Working through these can be one of the great lessons of the cell.
- **Be discreet** Decide amongst yourselves what level of confidentiality you are going to have. It is vital to be clear about this, and then stick to it (see below for more on this).
- **Be caring** Look out for the needs of one another, practical, emotional, physical, spiritual. Be prepared to go the extra mile.

How are the Cells put Together?

Peer cells are mostly put together on a geographical basis, although the geography doesn't always work! Because participants are spread throughout the UK we sometimes have to be 'creative' about cell composition. Cells will need to look carefully at the geography to see where is the best place to meet or whether meeting online is a better option.

It is not unusual for participants to feel uncertain about whether they are with the 'right people'. We endeavour to mix the cells to try and ensure there is diversity within the cell. Experience shows that when we meet with people who aren't exactly the same as us there is the greatest potential for new insights and personal development. So please don't dismiss others within your cell because they are not the same age/gender as you, don't have your 'experience', are in a different area of leadership and so on.

What if it Doesn't Work?

Experience within the programme shows that the key to the cells working is not chemistry but commitment. However, occasionally a cell doesn't work well. If you feel this is the case with your group, please do talk with the other members about it, and/or contact Sally Taylor. Please don't be shy about contacting us; we'd like to know if there are difficulties. These groups are for your benefit, not to make life hard for you.

Meeting During Residential 1

Here is our suggested outline for your meeting during residential 1:

The After Eight challenge At some point during the evening see if anyone can complete the After Eight challenges.

Story telling Take up to 60 minutes (7-8 minutes each plus time for a prayer) to tell your life story. Obviously there isn't time for every detail, but a summary. Pray briefly for each person at the end of their time. These questions may help you to think about what to share.

- Where were you born?
- Into what sort of family (parents, siblings, wider)?
- How was your early life up to 18?
- When and how did you come to faith?
- What are you passionate about?
- What are the current struggles for you?
- What are your hopes for your time on Arrow? And for the peer cell?

Peer cell logistics Take 15 minutes to talk through the following practicalities:

- Meeting dates. You need to arrange two meetings between the first and second residential (7-12 October 2018) for around two to three hours.
- Meeting venue. Where are you going to meet? You could choose a mutually convenient venue or decide to travel around each peer cell member for your first four meetings to familiarise yourself with each others' contexts.
- Leadership. How are you going to facilitate the cell? Are you going to have one person who co-ordinates and facilitates your times together? Will you share this role amongst yourselves?
- Maintaining contact. How will you maintain contact between the scheduled cell meetings? There are a number of ways you could do this. Some cells do a 10/10 each month. On the tenth of the month they spend ten minutes writing an email to the other members of the cell. This can also be done via Skype/Facetime/Zoom. Others have set up a WhatsApp group/Slack.
- Please note down your cell meeting dates on a piece of paper and hand it to Matt.

Confidentiality, Keeping Secrets, Transparency and Gossip

When we are in a situation and 'confidentiality' is mentioned, we tend to nod our heads sagely and agree. And indeed confidentiality does matter. But it's worth asking when does 'confidentiality' become collusion to keep 'hidden secrets'? Transparency, or openness, needs to be practised alongside the right use of confidentiality. But when does transparency tip over into gossip? Talk through the following together:

- What would be a right use of confidentiality for your peer cell? Is there any time when it could be an unhealthy practice?
- How might you need to exercise transparency with each other in your group?
- How can you avoid slipping into gossip?

Programme Team Involvement

After the group has determined its basic meeting pattern, we are available to address any issues you would like help with. Most of the groups are self-directed but occasionally a cell gets 'stuck'. Please contact us immediately if this happens as experience shows we may be able to help. We will ask you to review the cell group at the end of the programme.

You will find a suggested topics and discussion questions on the module overviews.

PEER CELLS
A Tool to Use – Action Learning

What is Action Learning?

A fancy name for a useful concept. Action learning is in essence about using the support of a group to solve problems and get things done. The notion of a 'problem' in this context is anything which is unresolved or partially formulated with which one's mind is pre-occupied.

Action learning is both about both learning from action and taking action from learning. It is a reflective process involving a small group (normally no more than six people) focused on one member's issue.

It takes time to 'learn' how to do action learning well. Don't give up after one attempt, especially if it didn't go too well. Any cell has to learn how to relate to one another and grow the trust that makes action learning a possibility.

How does it Work?

Within a peer cell meeting (normally two to three hours) you will need to decide if you are going to use action learning ahead of the meeting. Each person will need to come having identified a problem/issue they are prepared to talk about within the cell. It is essential that each person identifies a real issue, thus making themselves vulnerable to the cell. Each person is allocated 30-45 minutes with suitable space for a break between each part. The 'airtime' will involve the following components, although a great deal of flexibility is needed within the framework.

- **Presentation** An individual presents an issue. It needs to be real, alive and something which pre-occupies the mind of the individual.
- **Reflection** Other members of the cell help the individual find a way forward for their issue, primarily through asking 'open' questions (i.e. not answerable with a yes or no). The main types of questions are:
  Clarifying – to help the individual clarify the situation.
  Challenging – to help the individual achieve insight.
  Catalytic – to trigger new ideas.
  The ideal question is brief, incisive and elegant. The questions should lead the individual to define the issue more precisely, identify potential solutions, create options, and select a way forward.
- **Decision** The individual decides a way forward, shares it with the cell who then pray and support them in their action, and hold them accountable by asking how it went when they next meet (or before then if appropriate).

This cycle then repeats itself for each member of the cell.

What Makes for a Good Action Learning Experience?

No two cells will work in quite the same way, but here are some guidelines that are likely to make for a good experience.

- **Build rapport** A good action learning experience flows from relationships of trust and authenticity. This takes time, but the whole design of Arrow will hopefully help with this. It is likely that you will start with smaller and less personal issues and as trust builds will move to more personal and more complex issues. The aim is to create a supportive environment where real issues can be shared and explored without fear of judgment.

- **Respect confidentiality** The only thing that leaves the action learning experience is the learning. It is vital that cell members know that things won't be shared outside the cell.

- **Appoint a facilitator** It will help to appoint a facilitator from within the cell. Their role is to:
  ⇒ Ensure physical comfort of the cell.
  ⇒ Keep an eye on timing, and ensure you finish within the allocated time.
  ⇒ Invite each presenter to bring their issue.
  ⇒ Indicate a start to questions when the presenter has finished the above.
  ⇒ Ask clarifying questions when needed (How can we help you? Where would you like to be by the end of this time?)
  ⇒ Pick up on what is happening, slow things down if people are asking too many questions, too quickly.
  ⇒ Ensure cleanness of the process – no advice/anecdotes.

⇒ Moving the process on (presenting issue, reflecting on issue through questions, identifying options, and selecting a way forward).
⇒ Note action points, checking ownership of the issue remains with the presenter.
⇒ Ensure the process ends well.

This role can change each time you move on to a new person.

- **Take ownership** The focus is on your issue/problem, and the resolution will involve you taking responsibility for your assumptions, attitudes and actions. As someone has summarised 'I am part of the problem and the problem is part of me.' Only the owner of the problem can decide upon the right course of action for them.

- **Don't tell** The tendency is to tell the person what to do rather than support and ask questions. Listening and questioning by the cell is focused on better understanding and insights and on supporting the problem-owner rather than on solving the problem for them. The presenter of the issue should do most of the talking. There is no place for others to share their own issues or stories during someone else's time. It may be appropriate to engage in creative brainstorming/inputting ideas, but it helps if it is clearly identified when this begins and ends.

- **Be creative** A good action learning experience will involve creativity, playfulness, experimentation and laughter. Although serious and painful problems may be aired, it doesn't mean the atmosphere needs to be intense or heavy the whole time.

- **Review well** It is helpful to review how the process went, each person learning through the experience. Questions to help with such a review include:
  ⇒ How did I contribute?
  ⇒ What could I have done differently?
  ⇒ What other questions could have helped?
  ⇒ What have I learned form exploring another person's issues?
  ⇒ What action do I want to take? When?

In Summary

The acronym RECIPE is a helpful way of summarising the action learning approach.

R esponsibility for oneself – I must take responsibility for my issue.
E xperience-led – the issues presented are real issues, something I am struggling with, not theoretical.
C onfidentiality – the only thing taken out of the cell is the learning.
I anguage – avoid 'you' language.
P rocess – pay attention to the process as much as the content. How are people feeling?
E quality – everyone has the same opportunity to contribute.

If we can be of any help, please contact us.

An Alternative Action Learning Method

Jenny Rogers

There are innumerable ways that each member's time-slot can be structured. I was trained in action learning methodology by my friend and colleague Dr Judith Riley, and have found that her approach – my version of it is described here – works well.

- Ask the member whose turn it is to spend no more than five minutes outlining the issue using these headings:
  ⇒ What the issue is. What led up to it? Why is it such an important issue for me now?
  ⇒ Who else is involved?
  ⇒ What I have already tried.
  ⇒ What would make for an ideal solution for me?

- Now ask the problem-holder to sit out where he or she can see and hear the rest of the discussion but take no part in it. The discussion will include questions that have occurred to people while they have been listening or ideas that the problem-holder could find it useful to consider. This part of the process may take ten minutes.
- Use the flip chart to write down all the main points that the group makes – don't edit; use their language.
- Invite the problem-holder back into the group and ask for his or her immediate responses. At first people will find it strange to be in the room and to hear people discussing them, but with experience will become accustomed to it.
- Ask the problem-holder to use the flip chart pen to star any of the group's ideas that he or she has found especially interesting or would like to have clarified. Allow another ten minutes for this.
- Ask the problem-holder to facilitate the last five minutes of the time slot with an emphasis on what action he or she might take as a result of the discussion.

It is important to keep the group strictly to the agreed time slots. I have also found it better to stick to each member of the group having the same amount of time, otherwise it is possible for one person, extra-needy in his or her own eyes but not necessarily the most actually needy person in the group, to dominate. Resentment may not be expressed at the time, but it will probably be there and if left unchecked will destroy the set because it has, in effect, become a support group - not the purpose of action learning. Spend the last 20 minutes of the whole-group's time on feedback. Again, you might like to introduce some kind of structure to this process, asking each person to contribute a few minutes by completing these sentences:

- What has worked for me today has been...
- What worked less well for me was...
- The contributions I specially valued were...
- What I can do next time to ensure that our time is well spent is...

SOME QUESTIONS FOR USE IN GROUP INQUIRY

- What is the issue?
- What makes it an issue now?
- Who owns the issue?
- How important is it on a scale of one to ten?
- How much energy do you have to find a solution on a scale of one to ten?
- What have you already tried?
- How would it feel if the issue was solved?
- What stands in the way of that ideal solution?
- What is your own responsibility for what has been happening?
- What early signs are there that things are getting better?
- Imagine you are at your most resourceful, what do you say to yourself about this issue?
- What are the options for action?
- What criteria will you use to judge the options?
- Which option seems the best?
- What is the next/first step?
- When will you take it?

PEER CELLS
Skype Meetings

There will be occasions when having a Skype (or equivalent) call will be a more sensible option than physically meeting up. On those occasions, the following protocol will help you have a good meeting, as the temptation when Skyping can be to try to do other things at the same time.

OPTIONS
If you can use a service which allows you to see each other as well as talk it vastly increases the quality of the meeting. Options include:

- Up to eight people can use Skype for group video calls without the need for a Premium account, providing everyone has the latest version of Skype on their device..
- Google hangouts is free and allows you up to ten people on a video call.

SKYPE PROTOCOL

- Find a quiet place to be a part of the call, without distractions.
- Stay focused on the conversation even if you aren't contributing directly at that moment. Don't do email. Facebook etc; switch your mobile off/out of reach, put other phones on voicemail.
- If it helps you to concentrate take a few notes as the conversation develops, but if you are on a laptop it helps if you don't use the keyboard as every tap of a key is magnified in the conversation.
- Be clear about who is leading any discussion item.
- Be prepared for a few frustrating moments with the technology and try to be patient. (For a laugh, you might like to take a look at this video http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DYu_bGbZiiQ)

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