

LIFE Groups

Making disciples of Jesus who Gather, Grow, Go



LIFE Group Overseer's Manual



King's

Our big aim

It all starts with God

Everything starts with our awesome triune God. He creates, calls, rescues, redeems, saves, and restores. This act of creation and work of redemption is motivated and centred around His glory. His desire is that He might be known and enjoyed for His nature and character; recognised as supremely valuable, worthy and splendid. This is His mission.

Jesus commissions us to make disciples

For the church to fulfil the mission of God Jesus commissions us in Matthew 28:18-20:

'Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'

These words should shape the purpose of any local church, and King's is no exception. If we are about anything then we must be about this. This simplifies everything for us as we don't need to keep reinventing the wheel but can instead focus all our efforts, in every area of life, around making disciples. At King's this looks like:

Making disciples of Jesus who

- Gather** in friendship and family
- Grow** in character and gifting
- Go** in mission and service

In LIFE Groups then everything we do becomes about making disciples; seeing people start following Jesus and then helping them to mature into disciples who are baptised, and taught to obey everything Jesus commanded. The following pages will unpack how we make disciples in LIFE Groups through our LIFE Group Plumblines.

LIFE Groups are one of the primary places that we make disciples so the role you play in overseeing is a truly valuable one. It is through your love, care and support that as a church we are able to make mature disciples who are increasingly looking like Jesus.



LIFE Group Overseers

Discipling LIFE Group leaders and overseeing groups

The heart of your role is to provide oversight to one or more LIFE Groups. You will do this primarily by cultivating the relationship with your leaders enabling you to disciple and support them. As every group is different and no leader is the same, the way you carry out your oversight responsibilities will vary from group to group. As with any discipleship relationship you will need to work out what the LIFE Group leader needs and how you can enable them to flourish in their role of leading a group that makes disciples who gather, grow and go.

Your role as a LIFE Group Overseer

The part that you play in overseeing groups is essential to ensuring that we as a church pastor people well. As we all work together to make disciples, it is important that our leadership is marked by service. By using our God given gifts the body of Christ is built up.

The two key areas of responsibility for overseers are briefly described below and then unpacked in greater detail later in this manual.

1. Look into your groups

This is about knowing the groups you oversee. A lot of this will be done in conversation with your group leaders but it is also good to visit the groups you oversee from time to time. As you look into your groups you will be helping the leaders to centre everything around the LIFE Group plumbline. You will also be encouraging the discipling of new leaders and ensuring groups have support leaders. For more information on the plumbline please take a look at the LIFE Group Leader's manual.

2. Look out for your leaders

LIFE Groups are only as healthy as their leaders which makes it vital to get alongside them and disciple them. By being in regular contact, encouraging leaders and inspiring them you will see them grow and mature as disciples and as leaders. As new leaders are appointed and new groups started your role is to provide the necessary training so they are equipped to lead.

LIFE Group Overseers Team

The overall responsibility for LIFE Groups across King's sits with the Overseer Team leaders who are responsible to the elders for the direction of LIFE Groups as well as supporting and equipping you in your role.

There are overseers at each location which enable us to ensure we keep King's values front and centre as we move forward together and enables our groups to flourish across King's.

The Overseer Team leaders are here to help, supporting you when you need it and celebrating with you when things are going well. Do get in touch with your leaders if you feel that you could do with more wisdom in a particular situation or just want to chat something through.

LIFE Group Structure

The LIFE Group leadership and oversight structure is there to help groups flourish. We endeavour to provide sufficient oversight to groups while giving people the necessary space to grow in their giftings.



The Pastoral Core Team

There are some things in the life of a group where leaders may feel out of their depth, need support from others or that have wider implications in the life of the church. Examples would include things such as divisiveness, deliberate undermining of others - especially leaders, sexual immorality, lack of repentance, financial crises, unemployment, serious health issues, on-going substance misuse, and self harm etc.

In these situations it is not only your role to work with the leader but also to feed back to the Pastoral Core Team. Their role is not only to look at the wider pastoral issues across the church but also to serve you by giving support to an individual when you need more specialised help. As a church we are really blessed to have the support of this team so please do make use of them. It is always good to support one another when we face these types of challenges so please don't feel like you need to carry any burdens on your own.

The Pastoral Core Team also provide the Pastoral Equipping training approximately once a term to look at some of the pastoral issues we face as church and as individuals. These topics might help you in specific situations you are facing at the moment as well as giving you some training to help people in the future.

In these situations, make sure you lean into God's wonderful and abounding grace. Jesus sent His Holy Spirit to be our helper and so He is present in these times of need. Work closely with your leaders to help them and if required get alongside the person who needs support. As you do this please remember not to promise absolute confidentiality as this is neither wise, within your role or because of legal obligations.

Safeguarding concern?

The King's Safeguarding Policy provides a framework for children, youth and vulnerable adults. If you have any concerns in a situation speak to the Safeguarding Officer at your location.



Look into your groups

Sections

1. Ensure the plumbline is in place
2. Visit each group as appropriate
3. Encourage people in their gifts and identify potential leaders
4. Be involved when groups start and finish

An introduction

This is about knowing the groups you oversee. A lot of this will be done in conversation with your group leaders but it is also good to visit the groups you oversee from time to time. As you look into your groups you will be helping the leaders to centre everything around the LIFE Group Plumbline. For more information on the plumbline please take a look at the LIFE Group Leader's manual. You will also be encouraging the discipling of new leaders and ensuring groups have support leaders.

Each group requires a different level of active involvement. Inexperienced leaders or a group that has just started will need more help. Alternatively, experienced leaders with an established group will require less. By getting alongside the leaders you will know how best to disciple them.

Getting to know your groups is a real privilege and doing this in a way that honours and releases the leaders of the group is vital. By giving your leaders the support they need and the room to grow you will see them grow in their gifts and become even more effective at making disciples.

1. Ensure the plumbline is in place

We believe that if our groups follow the plumbline then they will make well rounded disciples of Jesus who gather, grow, go. Without a plumbline groups could over-emphasise specific things to the detriment of the whole. The plumbline is also incredibly helpful for being able to identify what isn't a LIFE Group. The plumbline is designed to give freedom to leaders while at the same time ensuring that the blueprint of every group is consistent.

As you look into your group it will be important to make sure every element of the plumbline is visible in the group. You can do this in conversation with your leaders while also observing it through their LIFE Group programme and when you visit the group. By having conversations with your leaders about the plumbline you will be able to gauge how 'on-board' they are with all the elements of it.

What does this look like for a new group?

You'll need to be intentional about training new leaders in the plumbline and how it is outworked in a group setting. The best way to do this will be to go through the LIFE Group Leader's Manual with them. Get their views on it and ask them to think about what they envisage it will look like in their group. Help them understand the value of having all four elements represented and that they'll need to see the flourishing of gifts in their group for this to happen effectively.

What if I'm struggling with this?

We find that if groups are over-emphasising specific parts of the plumbline then it's probably because they're focusing on what they are most gifted in or passionate about. Have a conversation with the LIFE Group Leader about how they think they're doing implementing the plumbline and help them understand that they may need to release others in the group to help them with the things they feel less confident in.

Some helpful questions to ask your leaders

- Q: How would you describe the balance of the plumbline of your group?
- Q: Do you feel any adjustment needs to be made to how you outwork the plumbline.
- Q: How are you involving others in implementing the plumbline?

2. Visit each group as appropriate

The frequency with which you visit the group will partly depend on the experience of the group leaders and the relationship you have with them. Through conversation you can work out what they would find helpful. The reason for visiting is partly to get to know the group better but also to disciple your leaders. You can encourage them and chat through things

that have worked well or maybe need developing. It's not Ofsted though, you're there to love, support, challenge and encourage! It is also a helpful opportunity to observe possible new leaders and encourage their involvement.

What does this look like for a new group?

If the leaders are fairly inexperienced then part of discipling them in this time of transition will involve being present in the group and may involve modelling what it looks like to lead a group well. You might lead a Wordsheet or a time of prayer or simply observe the leaders doing it and provide them with feedback afterwards. If leaders haven't had these things modelled to them well then it will be very difficult for them to lead the group effectively.

What if I'm struggling with this?

If you're finding it difficult to visit a group then your first step will be to try and identify the reason why. If you've got too many other commitments then it might be a good opportunity to reflect on what God wants you to be giving your time to. If you are receiving resistance from group leaders then it's good to have an open conversation with them about it. Approach it wanting to understand and love them and as you get to know your leaders better they are more likely to be open to you looking into the group.

Some helpful questions to ask your leaders

Q: When at your group how can we best serve you?

Q: How often would it be helpful to visit your group?

3. Encourage people in their gifts and identify potential leaders

Make sure your leaders know that part of their role is to release and encourage the gifting in others. Leaders can at times feel everything rests on their shoulders but the healthiest groups are where the leaders have identified and encouraged people to step out and use their gifts for the benefit of the group.

The most practical way of doing this is for your leaders to encourage others to lead specific things when they gather together. That might be leading a Wordsheet, a time of prayer, hosting or bringing a pack of biscuits. Leaders should be encouraged to give people small levels of responsibility to start with and for those who prove faithful, accountable and teachable to then give them more.

As people are given more responsibility and encouraged in their giftings there will be some who will emerge as leaders. Talk to the group leaders about whether these people could be support leaders or be involved in planting out a new group. Keep an eye out for leadership training opportunities at King's and let your group leaders know what is available.

What does this look like for a new group?

Releasing people into their gifting can be done straight away. Encourage the leaders to be praying for people in their group, observing what they're passionate about, and what they're good at. Some potential leaders become apparent straight away but for others it will take time as God works in their lives and they grow in confidence.

What if I'm struggling with this?

If your leaders are struggling to release and equip people then you may need to be more pro-active in getting to know people in the group. As you visit the group be on the lookout for gifts that maybe haven't been identified yet and if your leaders need more support have a conversation with them about how you can help.

Some helpful questions to ask your leaders

Q: Have you been looking out for and encouraging gifting in your group?

Q: Who in your group do you see leadership potential in?

Q: What opportunities have you given these people to try/develop gifting?

4. Be involved when groups start and finish

Later on in this manual we've included a guide for planting new groups. Starting groups well is obviously very important but it's also important to finish groups well too.

The reality is that there are times when groups need to finish. This can be for very natural and understandable reasons but at other times it can be for more difficult reasons. In whatever circumstance, it is good to help make this as positive an experience as possible. Take the opportunity to affirm the leaders, thank them for what they have done and encourage them for the future. Take time as a group to celebrate what God has done. Pray as a group for the next season and create an atmosphere where people feel able to bring prophetic words.

It's important that you help your leaders in this process. Make sure they know what other groups are available and encourage them to be having one-to-one conversations with the people in their group about this..

We would encourage you also to be proactive at keeping in touch with them, especially if they are stepping out of leadership completely. This can be a particularly tricky time where people feel a loss of identity and a lack of purpose.

Some helpful questions to ask your leaders

Q: How will you tell the group it's coming to an end?

Q: Do you know which groups there are to point others to?

Q: How will you help each group member to become part of another LIFE group?

Look out for your leaders

Sections

1. Get to know your leaders
2. Love and care for your leaders
3. Train up new leaders and support leaders

An introduction

One of the many privileges of overseeing groups is discipling and supporting your leaders. Getting alongside them in every season of their group, through the highs and the lows, the challenges and the joys, is a wonderful honour.

As we look out for our leaders we need to remember that God's church is a body of people, where every person is wonderfully interlinked and connected together. God has designed us to need each other and so your leaders will need you to look out for them.

It is your responsibility to do this by taking the initiative in getting to know your leaders and making sure they have the emotional and spiritual support they need. If you ever feel like you need more support yourselves then please don't ever hesitate to let the LIFE Group Core Team know. There is no shame in asking for help as we all have seasons and situations where we struggle and feel out of our depth.

1. Get to know your leaders

Your ability to disciple and support your leaders will be largely dependent upon the relationship you have with them. If they know you love them and want the best for them they're more likely to let you into their lives and into their group. Try to cultivate this type of relationship. Spend time with them, have them round for dinner and get to know their story.

Be sure to make contact with your leaders regularly to inspire and encourage them as well as to provide accountability in their walk with God. Sometimes this may be a quick chat on a Sunday or by text or email. At other times it may be face to face. These are great opportunities to model hospitality, as you open up not only your home but also your heart.

As you do this a great way to disciple them is to chat about their own personal LIFE Plumblines. Are they learning to be more like Jesus, integrating people on the fringe into their lives, developing deep friendships and proactively being a witness to those around them.?

What does this look like for a new group?

If you don't know the leaders well then you'll need to be particularly intentional about getting to know them. Spend time socialising together and as you do find out more about their story. Ask them about their hopes, fears and dreams. We all want to be understood and to find deep and meaningful connection with those around us. Take time to just listen and genuinely get to know them; showing that you really care about them as a person.

What if I'm struggling with this?

There could be a number of reasons you're finding this difficult but we would encourage you to treat this like any other relationship. Talk to your leaders about how the relationship is going. Open up a conversation about what is working well in the way you relate to each other as well as what is not working so well. Remember to centre everything in your conversations around love.

Some helpful questions to ask your leaders

- Q: Have you spent regular time with God this week, reading the bible and praying?
- Q: Have you been faithful in the responsibilities and relationships God has given to you?
- Q: Have you been able to share your faith through words, works or wonders?

2. Love and care for your leaders

If we're honest with ourselves we know that leading people has times of real joy that cause us to celebrate and encourage us, but there are also times that are just hard. It might be specific pastoral situations that are a challenge or it might be feelings of tiredness and a lack of motivation. It could also be a loss of faith for the group or a difficult personal situation.

As overseers it is your privilege to love and care for your leaders. In times of difficulty by standing with and praying for your leaders you will help them walk through the difficulties they face. This is where the rubber hits the road for what it means to be family; brothers and sisters on mission together. When one person is struggling we are able to come alongside, pray for them, and point them to Jesus. By putting into practice the one-anothers of the New Testament we will bring encouragement to those who are struggling.

More specifically, at times you may find your leaders losing enthusiasm for their group. This might look like them speaking critically about their group, not prioritising planning, or maybe even cancelling LIFE Group gatherings. We can all relate to these feelings of tiredness and discouragement. As an overseer keep an eye out for these signs and if someone is in this place it is better for them to take a break from leading than to completely burn out and be forced to stop leading. There is no shame in this and it may even help the group to rally around, providing love and support for the leader.

Some helpful questions to ask your leaders

- Q: How can I best love and care for you at the moment?
- Q: Are you feeling faith for the people in your group?
- Q: Are you finding grace from God as you lead your group?

3. Train up new leaders and support leaders

As you 'look into' the group and chat to group leaders there will be people who emerge as leaders. They will have displayed a level of gifting and proved themselves to be faithful, accountable and teachable. This is a good opportunity to explore bringing them into a position of leadership in the group. This might be to support the current leaders, replace existing leaders or to lead a group that is planted out.

Before anyone is approached about leading please speak to the LIFE Group Core Team so that they can check that the potential leader is a member, baptised in water, baptised in the Holy Spirit and that there are no on-going issues known to the elders. If there are any flags with regards to the person then it will be helpful to pause on the process and instead take time to disciple them.

After a leader has been identified and they've said yes to leading it will be your responsibility to give initial training by going through the LIFE Group Leader's Manual with them. Depending on the leader and their experience you might choose to do this during one session or multiple sessions if you feel it would be helpful to take your time. There is no prescriptive timescale for this so do whatever you feel is going to equip your leaders the best.

Alongside providing this training please also keep an eye out for and make your leaders aware of other leadership training at King's. We are always growing to be more like Jesus and growing in our gifts so finding ways to continue your leader's equipping and discipleship will serve everyone well.

Some helpful questions to ask your leaders

- Q: Who is growing in their walk with God and being faithful, accountable and teachable?
- Q: What opportunities are you giving to these people?
- Q: Are you spending time with them so that they can learn from you?



Your guide to planting new groups

The what and why of planting new groups

Planting a new group is when a small number of people (typically 4 to 6) within a group are ready and full of faith to start a new group themselves. It is your role to be overseeing the whole process from beginning to end. The existing group remains largely untouched with many of the good friendships fostered over years able to carry on as normal. We want to encourage groups to go deep with friendships while also being proactive in raising up new leaders and planning for the future.

It is the most effective way of making more disciples. Not only are gifts multiplied and new leaders given opportunities to grow but there is also space created for new disciples to grow. It also keeps those in your group focused on making more disciples and on their friends who don't yet follow Jesus.

We understand that there is often an emotional cost involved in change. If groups don't evolve and start new groups there is a very real danger they will begin to stagnate and eventually die. It's important that we fix our eyes on Jesus, remembering what it cost Him to lay down His life, and His teaching about the sacrifice involved in being a disciple (Luke 14:25-27).

1. Identify and equip new leaders

You are looking for people who have been given responsibility in the group and over time proved faithful, accountable and teachable. Before anyone is approached about leading please speak to the LIFE Group Core Team so that they can check they are a member, baptised in water, baptised in the Holy Spirit and that there are no on-going issues.

To equip new leaders you will need to work through the LIFE Group Leader's Manual with them. Depending on the experience of the leaders this may take one evening or you may choose to do it over a series of sessions. Encourage them to be at the LIFE Group Equipping evenings. Keep an eye out for other leadership training at King's and once the new group has started be proactive in going along and supporting the new leaders.

2. Let the group know your plans

Throughout the life of the group hopefully your leaders have been setting the expectation of growing and planting out new groups. When you are starting to plan for the new group it is good to mention it to the group and ask them to pray for a clear way ahead. Aim to build a sense of 'togetherness' in this, rather than something you are imposing on them. As you want to see the existing leaders grow and take more responsibility it may be best for them to announce the plans to the group. They will be the ones on the ground leading this through so they'll likely have the close relationships to make this as smooth as possible.

3. Prepare the group for planting out

It will take time to prepare the group, both spiritually and emotionally. There will need to be a bit of time between announcing and planting but make sure this isn't too long as you'll lose momentum! Take one or two group gatherings and use the plumbline to prepare the group:

- **Learning** – Look at the need for planting new groups and the heart behind it.
- **Integration** – Discuss how this will enable us to include others on the fringe, so that more people are brought into the church family.
- **Friendship** – Discuss how this will affect friendships in the group. Remember that the intention of planting new groups is that the existing group is left largely untouched, ensuring that many of the friendships can continue as normal.
- **Everyone a witness** – Discuss how this can help us witness to more people. The new group might, for example, be focused on a specific geographic area and therefore help with inviting neighbours. There will also be room in both groups for more people.

4. Who will be in the new group?

First and foremost it will be made up of the new leaders and their support leaders. There may be one or two other people that are passionate about being part of the group too. This could be because it will meet in their neighbourhood or because of existing friendships. In conversation you can find out whether it's best for both the individual but also for the groups.

5. The last gathering before planting out

This is a great opportunity to celebrate as a group together. Take the opportunity to pray for the leaders of both groups and seek God for prophetic words. Make sure you acknowledge that some people might be feeling apprehensive about the group changing. This is understandable and a good opportunity to bring encouragement.

6. Supporting your groups afterwards

Both of the groups are likely to need your hands-on support in the early weeks and months. Have a conversation with your leaders and decide together what will serve them well. The leaders may face new challenges which provide a great opportunity for you to disciple them.

What if your leaders don't want the group to change?

There could be a number of reasons for this. They might like the group as it is or they may feel the group isn't ready. Whatever the reason is the best thing is to talk to them about it. Listen to them and understand them. Once you've heard their heart you'll be better placed to help disciple them through it. One thing that might alert you to this is if your leaders are not proactively delegating responsibility to people in their group. Encourage them to always be helping others grow in their gifting.

LIFE Group

One Stop

All the resources you need in one place

This is a one stop shop for all the resources that you need to lead your LIFE Group. The resources are centred around our plumblne and provide you with a breadth of resources that will free you up to focus on discipling, loving and leading the people in your groups. The resources include:

- Word sheets
- Prayer sheets
- Worship sheets
- Worship playlists (Spotify and YouTube)
- Ideas
- Stories
- One dish recipes

Check out your One Stop

 kingsnorwich.com/onestop

LIFE Group

Church Suite

Keeping group information up to date

Please encourage your group leaders to use 'My Church Suite' to keep all their LIFE Group information up-to-date. They can add new people, remove existing people and even email out to their group. It is your responsibility to make sure they keep information on Church Suite that accurately reflects who is in their group.

Login to your account

 kingsnorwich.com/churchsuite





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Go in mission and service

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