



## **The UCAN Local Groups scheme**

*or how we aim to create a local UCAN presence throughout the country*

THANK YOU for expressing interest in the UCAN Local Groups scheme which we established in November 2013. Here is a simple guide for how it all works. This paper is being updated from time to time as the scheme develops and is available on the local groups page of the website at <http://www.john-truscott.co.uk/Administrators/UCAN-local-groups>

At the moment we have 17 groups already registered. Recent Area Training Days have resulted in enthusiasm to form new groups and we are pursuing the possibility in a number of new localities. The current groups are listed on the website as above and the details are updated as new groups join or correspondents change.

John Truscott

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### **1: The concept of UCAN Local Groups**

The UK Church Administrator Network was launched in May 2009 and has grown steadily since then to over 1,300 members. Over 200 are in our 'senior manager' category and the rest are in the other categories, with the majority as 'church administrators'.

During this time we have developed a range of resources which now include, in addition to the bimonthly *Update* mailings, conferences, training days, recordings, a remuneration survey, a distance learning course, and the online database available to all members.

The most important element of a network is of course the opportunity to meet and learn from others. The database provides the contact information necessary for this, the events allow for people to meet together to learn, the website enables an exchange of advice, but we see the need for a personal expression of the network at a local level.

A local network can be far more personal than a national one in that members can make contact with each other one-to-one without difficulty. It may not provide the breadth of information and ideas that a national network can offer, but it makes up for this in the ability to build deeper relationships and offer a personal sharing of ideas and good practice.

What we do not want to introduce is some form of local meeting opportunities that become unpopular, one more thing on the Administrator's 'To Do' list. So we are looking to build local groups from the bottom up rather than in any way imposing them from the centre. If Administrators in one locality want to form their own network and get together, we want to facilitate that and encourage it. If there is no enthusiasm, then that is no problem as nothing will start.

## **2: The need for some form of control**

But for groups that are self-governing we have to have some limits to what can be allowed if they are to take the title 'UCAN' in any way. The board have considered this and feel that they would like to maintain the least possible control over local decision-making consistent with the name of UCAN not being brought into disrepute nor our Christian stance being compromised. In other words we are happy to keep controls to a minimum and take the risk of something going wrong! So the requirements we have set out for any local group to be endorsed by UCAN are minimal but not non-existent.

## **3: What we can offer a UCAN Local Group**

A local group of Church Administrators that becomes an official UCAN Local Group can expect the following benefits.

- 1 The use of the name UCAN (UK Church Administrator Network) which, as a national body, gives the group a sense of belonging to something greater than itself and a name which, we trust, will become better known throughout the Church as time goes on and UCAN continues to grow.
- 2 The use of the UCAN logo and brand colour if they wish.
- 3 A listing on the website and coverage in *UCAN Update* which will give the group a profile and enable other Administrators to be aware of its existence.
- 4 Support and advice from the centre over matters ranging from speakers to issues of organisation which the group's members may be encountering.
- 5 Practical help in establishing a group for the first time through promotion, access to the UCAN database, etc.

- 6 A link with other UCAN local groups for ideas and support.
- 7 Reduced rates for block-booked group members at UCAN Area Training Days.

#### **4: What we ask in return**

To become an official UCAN local group we request the following.

- 1 A leader/correspondent (or two separate people) who is/are UCAN member(s). Other members of the group do not have to be UCAN members although we hope each group will strongly encourage membership.
- 2 A short initial statement outlining aims and activities/plans which the board approve before authorising the group. If the group already exists, some idea of how long it has been running and what it has done in this time would be useful.
- 3 A short annual report to the UCAN board of activities and membership when requested, plus occasional news for inclusion in *UCAN News Update*.
- 4 The group to promote UCAN events and resources within its own membership and to support the aims and Christian basis of UCAN.
- 5 Agreement that the board reserves the right to refuse an application or to terminate the UCAN link in the unlikely event of this ever becoming necessary.
- 6 We welcome suggestions from Local Groups for how we run UCAN centrally and what else we can do to support the groups.

#### **5: Some questions and answers**

##### **What materials can UCAN provide?**

We run the network very simply and web-based so at present we do not have headed stationery or glossy brochures. We are happy to provide cards to promote UCAN and cards listing all the items in the resources section of John Truscott's website.

##### **How would the Area Training Day offer work?**

Five or more bookings from members of one UCAN local group attract a £5 per person discount on the fee for the day. See below for the detail.

##### **How do we use the UCAN label?**

The most likely way is to call your group the 'UCAN Local Group in (name of place)' or 'The UCAN (name of place) group'.

### **Are there any specialist groups?**

We have three local groups designed for 'senior manager' members designed to discuss more specialised issues, usually relating to larger churches. These groups have the tag 'Plus' applied after the name, such as 'West Midlands Plus'. There is one group specifically for Methodist Administrators in one area. All other groups at present are geographical and open to any type of Church Administrator. We are open to other specialist ideas where justified.

### **What would a local group actually do?**

Section 6 below gives some ideas.

## **6: Sample statement and activities**

Here is a typical statement from a group:

*Our group exists to*

- *meet once a quarter (or term) to get to know each other and share resources and ideas;*
- *enable us to contact each other for support and practical help, removing the sense of isolation that some of us can otherwise feel;*
- *share knowledge and best practice;*
- *pray for each other in the joys and problems we face in our work;*
- *encourage our churches to recognise the spiritual nature of our ministry;*
- *promote membership of UCAN to other churches in our town.*

Most groups will probably restrict themselves to occasional meetings, perhaps over lunch if churches can be persuaded to see such events as happening in work time. But some groups may wish to lay on occasional training events, arrange visits to other churches, set up a simple news-sheet or prayer-letter, establish a central Dropbox facility, build a local online knowledge base, recommend resources, link up with another UCAN local group occasionally, etc. *UCAN Update* reports will give ideas.

Groups work best when there is a well-articulated purpose, and when meetings have a clear focus so everyone can see it is worth their while investing time in the activity. There need to be clear benefits if busy Church Administrators are to be encouraged to join.

## **7: How does the Area Training Day scheme work in practice?**

- 1 If five or more people in your group's membership book they may pay either £34 (UCAN members) or £44 (non-members) instead of £39 and £49 respectively.
- 2 This applies whether you put one block booking in with one payment, or each books separately.

- 3 But in the latter case John first needs to hear from you that (names) are claiming this discount so he knows there are at least five and they are all genuine members of your group.
- 4 If A and B belong to the same church and to your local group they get the £5 discount either way but they cannot claim £10 off the fee. But you need only find three more people to make up your five from the local group.
- 5 If one of the two is a local group member and the other is not, both may come at the reduced rate (because from the same church) but you need find four more to make up your five from the local group.

The aim is to keep it really simple and not make a fuss in borderline cases so John will accept whatever you tell him – if reasonable! The aim is to encourage local groups to come together.

## **8: So, how do we join?**

Please write to or email John Truscott (contact details below) providing the following details.

- 1 The name of the proposed Local Group and the geographical area you would expect to cover.
- 2 The name of the leader / UCAN correspondent (both names if two different people). Note that UCAN will already hold full contact details as both need to be UCAN members. If you want us to publicise different contact details, please advise.
- 3 Some idea of the size of the group as at present, and any plans to extend this (we quite understand if the boundaries of membership are not well defined).
- 4 A short statement for the UCAN board as described above in section 4 point 2 and see too the example in section 6.
- 5 A request for the UCAN board to approve your membership of the Local Group scheme and your agreement to the points in section 4 of this paper.

*John Truscott National Co-ordinator UK Church Administrator Network (UCAN)  
69 Sandridge Road, St Albans, AL1 4AG Tel: 01727 832176  
Email: [john@john-truscott.co.uk](mailto:john@john-truscott.co.uk)*