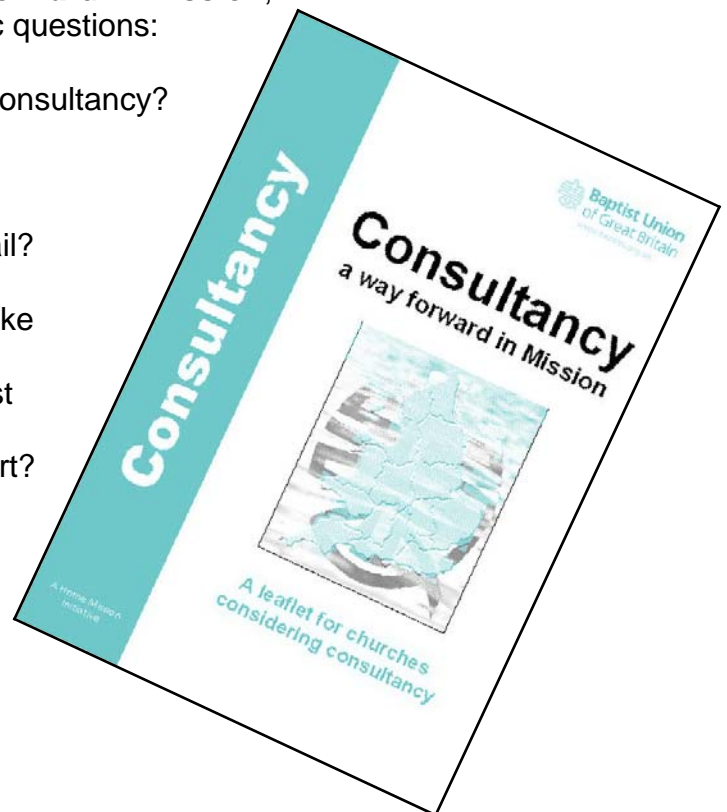


Embarking on Consultancy

This briefing paper is to help churches that have signed up for a consultancy to understand the process, and how to get the most out of it.

It should be read alongside the little introductory leaflet, **Consultancy – a way forward in Mission**, which answers the basic questions:

- 1 Why engage in Consultancy?
- 2 Who will do it?
- 3 What does it entail?
- 4 How long will it take
- 5 What would it cost
- 6 When can we start?



(extra copies are available from your association or the Mission Department)

Definition of Consultancy

So that we are all clear about what we mean by Consultancy, the following is our working definition: *(based on the work of Fuzz & Carolyn Kitto)*

- a partnership between church and consultants
- in discerning the call of God
- to a particular church in its context
- at a particular time
- and in taking steps forward in that mission

All through the Consultancy, the desire is to hear what God is saying. Baptists are familiar with the concept of the gathered church seeking the mind of Christ through the Church Meeting, believing that the Lord will reveal his will and purposes through what is said and agreed (on the model of Acts 15). The Consultancy process is in many ways the same. As questions are asked, issues discussed and ideas put forward in the context of prayer, we look to the Lord to determine the outcomes in such a way as to shape and encourage his church. Consultancy differs from the Church Meeting in not being a formal decision-making occasion – leaving a later Church Meeting to discuss the *Findings* (outcomes) of the Consultancy and to make decisions about an Action Plan.

Values in Consultancy

The values/principles on which BUGB Consultancy is based are set out below. It is the responsibility of church and consultants to ensure that these are followed harmoniously.

- 1 Consultancy is a process and a partnership, involving mutual exploration and learning. At the heart of it is listening to the Holy Spirit regarding the church's spiritual journey, in the context of prayer, prophecy and reflection. **The consultant is there to help the church make its own journey.** Consultants are essentially servants of the church and it is not their role to impose their own views on it.
- 2 The consultants will enable the local church to retain the sense of initiative in and ownership of the whole process.
It is the church which must make choices, aided by the tools provided by the consultant.
What they discover, they will own - Bible Society.
- 3 To this end, the church will work with the consultants at the outset to agree the scope and expectations behind the consultancy.
- 4 In embarking on consultancy, the church commits itself to allocate appropriate resources of time, energy and money to enable the partnership to be effective. In the longer term, the church may also have to consider allocating resources to implement changes called for by the consultancy findings.
- 5 To be of value, the consultancy needs to be conducted with openness and integrity on all sides. It is confidential, and any elements of it may only be taken 'outside' the process with the consent of the church.
- 6 The core of this consultancy is **mission**, whilst recognising that other factors might be drawn into the picture.

Overview of the Consultancy

The consultancy has a number of stages:

1 Initial contact with the Association and Consultants

The Regional Minister (or someone in the association with special responsibility for consultancy) will arrange for consultants to be allocated to the church, having first satisfied him/herself that there is no reason why the consultancy should not go ahead at this time.

The church firms up its decision to engage in consultancy, and initial contact is made with the consultants - ideally by personal visit. The consultants may suggest a discussion and/or exercises designed to help them tailor the consultancy as closely as possible to the needs of the church.

A timetable for all the various parts of the process should be established as early on as possible, so that busy diaries can be accommodated.

2 Information gathering, via Questionnaire and Community Profile

The consultants will send out a Questionnaire, covering a whole range of questions about the church's life and work. Someone in the leadership of the church should take the responsibility for completing it, but with the help of a couple of others. It will be necessary to do a certain amount of research in order to complete the Questionnaire, so allow time for doing this and do not put off tackling it until near the deadline! *The consultants will have their own preparations to complete.*

The consultants will also ask the church to use the Internet to compile a Community Profile. The guidance for this is at the end of this leaflet. Look for someone familiar with the Internet, and set them to work. Further and more detailed information should be available from the Local Authority, and would help to amplify what can be discovered from the Internet. A good local map might also be useful.



In order to get the whole congregation thinking about mission and so that they know what to expect when the main Weekend Visit occurs, three studies for small groups and two sermon outlines have been specially written. These are an optional part of consultancy, of course, but it has been found that the most exciting and meaningful consultancies have been in churches that have taken their preparation seriously. These studies and outlines are available from the consultants or from the Mission Department (Tel: 01235 517716).

Last, but not least, make the consultancy a matter of prayer at every suitable opportunity!

3 Main Visit (at a weekend, 3-4 months after initial contact)

This is designed to help the church explore what the Spirit is saying. The consultants spend the Friday evening with the leaders and the Saturday with as large a percentage of the congregation as possible. **Another key to a successful consultancy is to get most of the congregation (church members or not) along on the Saturday.** The Questionnaire and Community Profiles form the core of the visit, reinforced by other exercises. In exceptional cases, it may help the consultants to make an extra visit (eg to see an innovative piece of work that could not be seen first hand at the main visit).

All through the weekend, the consultants and the church will be working together to identify significant **Mission Issues**. These will be listed and freely discussed, and will then form the basis of the **Findings** that the consultants will later present to the church.

4 The Consultants' Findings (maybe six months on from initial contact)

The consultants write up their findings, and have them vetted by someone at the church for accuracy (names, terms and other details). The *Findings* will list the significant issues that emerge at the Main Visit, and the consultants will offer some comment and interpretation. **However, it will be up to the church to decide what to make of the Findings.**

The consultants will not merely send the church the written *Findings*, but will make a presentation - **ideally to the whole church, or to the Church Meeting.** This gives people a chance to get a good grasp of what is being said and – hopefully – to get excited. The process of the church making choices about future action now begins.

5 Implementing the Action Plan (three visits spread over 12 months)

Drawing up and implementing an Action Plan is entirely the responsibility of the church. However, having an Action Plan is not the same thing as implementing it, and the consultants are prepared to make up to three visits in the following twelve months to help in the process.

Goal-setting (Useful in drafting Action Plan)

The whole concept of setting goals sometimes makes Christians very nervous, on the grounds that only God can set out the future for any of us. This nervousness has been compounded by occasional unwise exercises in goal-setting, of the 'forty converts per month' variety.

However, goal-setting is by no means alien to the Gospel and Jesus sometimes does it: in Luke 10, he sends his seventy-two disciples out in pairs ahead of him, with specific instructions; he later sets his face to go to Jerusalem. There is nothing random about Jesus' ministry, though he often found himself reacting to people and situations, and changing his plans. Paul's ministry can also be viewed in this light.

Once a church has identified a number of **Mission Issues**, it needs to turn the list into an Action Plan. This involves

- 1 **goal-setting**
- 2 **establishing priorities**

Goals can be separated into long, medium and short term.

- **Long term goals** are about the overall objectives of the church. They may be expressed in the church's Mission Statement, and will certainly be consistent with it, eg to bring the Gospel to young people in the neighbourhood.
- **Medium term goals** will represent a step towards a long term goal. The timescale might be upwards of two years, eg to develop a ministry in the local schools.
- **Short term goals** are immediate, or for the year ahead, eg to initiate discussions with the local head teachers, this term.

Ill-conceived goals can be more of a hindrance than a help, so encourage churches to apply the following criteria to any goals they consider. Lots of consultants use the **SMART** acronym to explain goal setting. Each one uses a slightly different set of criteria. For our purposes, **SMART** refers to goals that are **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant and **T**ime-framed.

Specific - means that your goal is right to the point

Measurable - means that you will know when you have reached your goal

Achievable - means that your goal is something you have every expectation of achieving, and will therefore not become discouraged

Relevant – means that your goal is right for you at this time, and achieving it will benefit you

Time-framed means that you set yourself a time limit to achieve it in, and that it is realistic (not too short and not too long).

Another important criterion is that goals are SHARED. The whole consultancy process is designed to ensure that the goals are not the private dream of the minister or any other leader but are shared and owned by the congregation.

Priorities

Having a stack of goals is not the same as having an Action Plan. Goals need to be prioritised, with due regard to the manageability of what is proposed as well as the urgency. The church's resources are unlikely to be such that it can tackle everything at once!

6 Review

This is not strictly part of the consultancy, but further down the track (perhaps three years after the process began?) somebody from the association will contact the church to find out how things are shaping up ... and whether they think it right to start all over again!



Overview of the Main (Weekend) Visit

The following timetable is based on the assumption that the church would prefer to pack everything into a long Saturday morning rather than run into the afternoon. However, running into the afternoon has the advantages of more time to talk through issues, and more mixing time (including a simple lunch). The drawback is that, understandably, people tend to be more willing to put in a full morning than to commit themselves to a morning plus part of the afternoon. **The church will have to decide which option to take**, and the consultants can offer alternative timetables.

FRIDAY EVENING

2000	Session 1:	Responses from the Leadership (Questionnaire and Community Profile)
2130	End	

SATURDAY MORNING

0930	Session 2:	Introduction, and Community Factors
1010	Mini-break	
1015	Session 3:	Interpreting the Questionnaire
1045	Coffee	
1110	Session 4:	Causes of Decline; Signs of Growth (or equivalent alternative exercises)
1210	Mini-break	
1215	Session 5:	Final comments; closure
1245	End	

Obtaining Demographic data from the Office for National Statistics

The Office for National Statistics has made Census data available on the 'Neighbourhood Statistics' website. It is the most comprehensive free demographic information currently available, and includes several ways to access local area information. Through this website you will be able to find summary statistics for an area through a postcode or town search and find more detailed statistics by subject name, administrative area name or by using an interactive map. The results provide the headline figures for each topic covered in the Census.

The website is being updated continually, as new information becomes available, and you may find that the website looks slightly different from the description given here. If this is the case, assistance is available in the **User Guide** in the Help section.

Go to: <http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/home.asp>

The Neighbourhood Statistics web site is best viewed using **Internet Explorer version 5.5 or higher**, with popups, JavaScript, images and cookies enabled. If you access the site with another configuration, some elements of the site may not work as well, or not work at all.

All users with more recent browsers (such as **Netscape 7.0 or Mozilla Firefox**) will be able to access a Neighbourhood Profile for an area or browse and download ready-made tables, though JavaScript is used to improve the navigation.

Users with Internet Explorer (version 5.5 or higher) and JavaScript enabled will have exclusive access to create their own tables using a selection of topics and areas (both pre-defined and constructed). These tables can also be used in the generation of related maps and charts.

If you get stuck, please feel free to email Mary Parker in the Mission Department: mparker@baptist.org.uk or contact the Office for National Statistics direct on: 0845 601 3034 or email info@statistics.gov.uk

1 Neighbourhood Profile

Select this option for summary information about your area, on the following topics: Location, People and society, Health and care, Deprivation, Economic activity, Students, education, skills and training, and Housing and households.

You will need to enter your full postcode or a city or town name. A written report or 'profile' with a map of the area will be produced.

- If you have entered a **postcode**, the profile will be based on areas known as super output areas which contain around 1500 people, with some items based on ward and local authority information.
- If you have entered a **town or city**, the report will be based on local authority level information and will be compared with regional and national data.

When creating a neighbourhood profile in this way you will be presented with a map of the area to which most of the data relate: it is very important to consider how well the area covered by the data match your area of interest. The realistic 'catchment area' of most churches will cover more than one super output area or ward, but will rarely be as large as a local authority district. Changing the area covered by the statistics can dramatically alter the neighbourhood profile

- Information about **population** is available annually from the mid-year population estimates. These estimates are only available by five year age bands at a local authority level, and do not provide the detailed breakdowns available from the population information collected via the Census, last carried out in 2001. This section uses both these sources of information to provide as broad a picture as possible of the area.
- A '**printer friendly**' version of these results is available by clicking on the printer icon at the lower left of the screen (you may need to scroll down to find this).

2 Find detailed statistics by subject

Here the individual reports of topics covered by the 2001 census are set out by subject for the whole of England and Wales, and also broken down by individual regions of the countries.

- From the **Home page** you will need to click on '**Topics**' to browse these tables and download the statistics.
- From the next screen you can click on the main titles to see the **individual topics** available.

- The first option is to enter a **search** term into the box provided to locate the most relevant dataset (s) to your requirement and then press Return or click the 'Go' button.
- Alternatively, you can **browse the datasets** available using the and icons to expand and collapse the view.
- For **more information** about what is included in the topic's dataset, click on the **i** at the end of the title. This provides information on who supplied the data, how and where the data was collected, the variables and any other important supplementary notes.
- When you have selected the topics you require, click in the **Select** circles on the right hand side of the screen and click '**Next**' at the lower right of the screen.
- On the next screen you have the option to **view the data** or **download** it so that it can be saved in a suitable location on your computer. When you have made your selection, click on '**Next**' at the lower right of the screen.
- If you select **View** then you are given two options to view the data in different geographic area types, details of which can be seen by clicking on the at the end of the title. There is an option to **enlarge the table** on screen to make it easier to see. Please also note that on large tables only some of the columns will be visible, and you can access the next range of columns by clicking on **Next** at the upper right of the screen. At the upper left of the screen you can also change the **number of columns** being displayed.
- To **find data for your chosen area**, click on the higher geographical area which contains the chosen area. For example, to get data for 'Middlesbrough' click on 'North East' and the screen will refresh to show the same table, for the geographical areas that make up that higher area. Some layers of the hierarchy may not contain data (and will show as double dots '..' to show 'not available'), but there may be data for lower levels of the hierarchy.
- You can **print** the data by clicking on the Print icon at the upper right of the screen.
- When you select **Download**, the data is organised according to geographic area and the area you are interested in is likely to be represented by just a few lines in a much larger dataset
- You can download the data:
 - by area, for example London or East Midlands, or
 - by area type, for example local authorities or health areas.
 Some sets of data have been broken up into smaller files to make them easier to download.
- There are two options for downloading data:
 - Microsoft Excel (.xls)
 - Comma separated values (.csv) – unformatted and compatible with most databases.
- All files are zipped (compressed) to make them quicker to download, and include information stored in Acrobat PDF format. You may need to download software to open zipped files or read PDF, and links are available on screen to allow you to do this if necessary.

ACORN stands for 'A Classification of Residential Neighbourhood' and is a geodemographic classification using census and other data to identify and understand the UK population and the demand for products and services. Businesses use this information to improve their understanding of customers, target markets and determine where to locate operations and this information may also be useful in discovering the needs of a church's community.

You can access the website at <http://www.caci.co.uk/acorn/default.asp> and will need to register with an email address some personal details before being able to use it. You will be sent a 'passkey' by email which you will enter as your password each time you access the site.

The information available on this website is based on postcodes and so is very localised; you will need to know the postcodes for different areas of the community being served by the church, and enter these separately to give an overview of the community. For each postcode entered you will be given an ACORN classification, and there are further details about the characteristics of each of the fifty-six ACORN types available in a downloadable brochure. You can also find out more about the lifestyle or demographic characteristics of this ACORN type relative to the rest of the UK.

A similar classification of census output areas, produced by the Office for National Statistics is available in the Neighbourhood Statistics topics and can be found in the 'Indices of Deprivation and Classification' heading.

Practicalities

The church would normally be expected to meet the **out-of-pocket and travel expenses** of consultants, and to provide meals and accommodation, where appropriate. In some circumstances (particularly when a church has few resources), association and national staff may be able to waive these obligations.

Above and beyond this, the consultants should receive a standard honorarium (the recommended amount being £75.00). This is in recognition of time and energy given to the church, but also has the effect of prompting all parties, church and consultants, to give appropriate priority to the consultancy.

Where this is a problem for a church, the association may agree to pay the honorarium on its behalf. Should wealthier churches choose to contribute more than the agreed level, the surplus could be held by the association to help it cover for less wealthy ones.

Preparation checklist for the Main Visit

- **Ahead of the Main Visit**, someone (with the help of others) will have completed the Questionnaire and sent it back to the consultants by the agreed date.
- Someone will also have compiled a Community Profile from the Internet and, if possible, will have augmented this with information gleaned from the Local Authority etc.
- Ensure that there are enough copies of the Community Profile for all the leadership to work with on the Friday evening.
- Have enough copies of the completed Questionnaire for all who attend on the Saturday (*or one copy between two*).
- Make sure that the refreshments are organised!

A supply of blank acetates and pens, some Blu-tack and flipchart marker pens would also be useful!

