

Lichfield Diocese
Spiritual Companions
Code of Practice

1. Use

This Code of Practice applies to Spiritual Companions who are offering Spiritual Direction to pilgrims who have been introduced by a Coordinator of Companions in one of the Episcopal Areas of the Diocese.

It deals with elements of good practice that Companions must attend to. A fuller set of guidelines for Spiritual Direction is available from the Retreat Association at: <http://www.retreats.org.uk/documents/spiritual-direction-guidelines.pdf> and Companions are encouraged to use these for reflection on their own practice.

2. Values

The Spiritual Companion must have a commitment to:

- a) a reverent respect for the relationship between the pilgrim and God;
- b) respecting human rights and dignity;
- c) ensuring the integrity of the companion/pilgrim relationship;
- d) make a safe space for the pilgrim to share all aspects of their journey in confidence;
- e) ongoing training and enhancement of skills;
- f) appreciating the breadth and variety of religious experience and culture;
- g) faithful attendance at a church of their denomination.

3. Principles

The Spiritual Companion should hold and reflect prayerfully on all the information that is shared with him/her with care and courtesy. This will be evidenced by:

- a) honouring the trust placed in them by the pilgrim
- b) respecting and encouraging the pilgrim to make his/her own decisions
- c) encouraging the pilgrim's well-being and development of his/her own self knowledge
- d) maintaining the pilgrim's confidentiality
- e) praying for those they accompany.

4. Personal Qualities

The Spiritual Companion's qualities should include:

Empathy	Sincerity	Integrity	Resilience
Respect	Competence	Self-knowledge	Fairness
Wisdom	Courage	Sensitivity	Reliability

5. Standards of Care and Practice

The Spiritual Companion should be committed to providing a good standard of practice and care. S/he should:

- a) offer a good quality of care and maintain a high level of competence
- b) be aware of his/her own limitations
- c) clarify regularly the boundaries and ground rules of the companion/pilgrim relationship, e.g. that you are not there as a counsellor or psychotherapist but as a companion on the spiritual journey.
- d) be aware of the difficulties that can arise from a change of circumstance whereby, e.g. companion and pilgrim begin to meet in regular church situation or serve on the same committee.

See Section 9 below for actions in cases of difficulty.

6. Maintaining Competence

- a) Supervision: The purpose of supervision is to help the Spiritual Companion understand how s/he is being affected by what is being shared, so that his/her response is governed by the needs of the Pilgrim rather than the Companion.

So good practice requires that the Spiritual Companion arranges supervision sessions regularly, at least twice a year. This can be one-to-one with a Supervisor, facilitated group supervision arranged by the diocese; peer supervision; phone or self supervision for the experienced but house-bound person only.

If during group supervision a group member recognises who is being described s/he will immediately declare this recognition and that particular exercise will cease.

Spiritual Companions should also ensure that they:

- b) attend training days;
- c) regularly review their standard of work;
- d) note and observe any legal requirements concerning their work; e.g. safeguarding requirements.
- e) make proper space for preparation beforehand and prayer afterwards;
- f) have their own Spiritual Companion that they see regularly.

7. Keeping Trust

Spiritual Companions should ensure that they:

- a) listen with ear, heart, mind and soul;
- b) communicate in ways that are sensitive to the pilgrim's own physical and cultural needs;
- c) show respect for the pilgrim's privacy and dignity;
- d) do not allow any personal views they may hold about lifestyle, gender, age, disability, race, sexual orientation, culture, faith or churchmanship, to interfere with their ministry to a pilgrim;

- e) honour, in so far as possible, their availability to those they companion.
- f) Leave clear information of who they are seeing and how they can be contacted in the event of the Companion's death.

8. Reward

Spiritual Direction is offered in love and for many this will include offering it free of material reward, which helps to ensure that no one is denied this ministry because of material cost. For others, charging is a fair way of valuing the ministry and keeping it sustainable. The following are guidelines.

- a) Those in Anglican stipendiary or licensed self-supporting ministry are reminded that they may not charge for the ministry to which they are licensed. They may charge expenses or (where part-time or self-supporting) for work outside their licensed ministry.
- b) Those who charge for this ministry as part of their earnings portfolio are reminded that they are not covered by diocesan insurance.
- c) Some practices include:
 - i. leaving it to the pilgrim to decide if they wish to give something.
 - ii. inviting a contribution in exchange for your time, ranging from undertaking a task such as gardening or ironing in exchange for the time given to the equivalent of an hour's earnings given by the pilgrim to the companion.
 - iii. donations to charity;
 - iv. offering the ministry as gift.

Pilgrims should always be clear, by end of first meeting at the latest, what approach is being adopted.

9. In Cases of Difficulty

The Spiritual Companion should initially refer to his/her Supervisor to help discern the core of the issue. Possible further actions include:

- a) If issues of child protection or vulnerable adult protection are apparent, companions are required to consult with the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer.
- b) Matters concerning the Companion's own spiritual journey would be taken to his/her own Spiritual Companion.
- c) Issues to do with the referral of pilgrims to Companions should be taken up with the Area Coordinator. This could include signalling 'not available for further pilgrims' or making another Companion available to a pilgrim.
- d) If a need for counselling or psychotherapy arises referral to the Bishop's Adviser on pastoral care and well-being is recommended. Companionship can also continue.