

**Please make these guidelines available to everyone
in your parish who exercises pastoral ministry**

Guidelines for Good Practice in Pastoral Ministry



DIOCESE OF
BATH & WELLS

Changing Lives, Changing Churches for Changing Communities

Introduction

We are pleased to see a revision of the Guidelines for Good Pastoral Practice in Pastoral Ministry. Our calling is a demanding one and it is important we take good care of ourselves, and those we minister to, in fulfilling God's purposes in ministry and mission.

We need to be aware of the place of boundaries and frameworks for our work and ministry. These guidelines help us very usefully here, and we commend a thorough reading of them. Please put them in a place where you can remind yourself from time to time what is good practice in pastoral ministry.

We also ask you to make them available to everyone in your parish who exercises pastoral ministry.

Our gospel calls us to live in a spirit of freedom. Having guidelines supports such a spirit. These are not intended to be restrictive, but protective and nurturing.

These are exciting times in which to live. They are also challenging. May God grant us wisdom and courage to face the times and to serve the cause of the Gospel within them, to his praise and glory.



The Right Reverend Peter Price
Bishop of Bath & Wells



The Right Reverend Peter Maurice
Bishop of Taunton

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Spirituality

The call to ministry is first and foremost a call to discipleship of our Lord Jesus Christ and the development of that discipleship in the discipline of prayer, bible study and the giving of time and space to the discernment of the prompting of the Holy Spirit. To this end every minister needs to ensure that time and resources are available for their own spiritual growth.

In the ordination service we are asked by the Bishop if we will fashion our lives and that of our household "according to the way of Christ, that we may be a pattern and example to Christian people". The ordinal then reminds us that we "cannot bear the weight of this calling in our own strength, but only by the grace and power of God". Therefore we should pray earnestly for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Discernment

Ministry, in terms of pastor, spiritual guide and representative of the faith, involves a position of power and trust in relationships with parishioners, colleagues and trainees. Good practice involves discerning the dynamics of such power and its creative use in terms of sharing with others in the work of the Kingdom. With power lies responsibility and the call to service. Ministers are called to be servants of the Lord who first came to be the servant of all.

Spiritual discernment is facilitated by sharing the journey of ministry with another person. It is good practice for a minister to have some person or a team to whom to turn for help on a regular basis as a spiritual guide or confidant, not necessarily within the tradition of the Church of England.

Those exercising pastoral ministry should:

- Uphold and enhance the good standing of the Church as the Body of Christ.
- Develop and be responsible for their own continuing training and skill development.
- Encourage and affirm new ministers within their oversight and assist others in discerning their vocation.
- Develop a habit of reflective ministry to include growth in self-awareness and regular review of workload and procedures.
- Make full use of appropriate forms of ministerial review.
- Care for people by attending to correspondence and enquiries promptly and efficiently, and being punctual for agreed appointments.
- Be accountable for advice given and decisions taken.
- Be aware of other helping ministries and relevant statutory agencies.
- Be alert to situations which may expose members of their family to risk, including receiving difficult phone calls.

They should not:

- Undertake professional duties whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs or when medically advised not to.
- Undertake duties or responsibilities that are beyond their proper competence or training.
- Confuse work/pastoral relationships with personal friendships.
- Abuse the privileged relationship established with another person, or abuse the access this gives them to a person's time, family, home, possessions or workplace.
- Feel the need to meet every pastoral situation alone especially when there is potential for violence or risk to self or others.

- Spend time with a child, children or young people in a place separate from others.
- Infringe the boundaries between church finance and personal monies.
- Seek to receive any personal advantage or gain, whether monetary, emotional, sexual or material, by virtue of ministerial position.
- Render ministerial service to members of another parish, church or pastoral cure without consulting the minister concerned.
- Upon resignation or retirement, maintain professional relationships with those formerly under their pastoral care.

Pastoral Care

Pastoral care is a significant aspect of Christian ministry.

Good practice requires an understanding of the complexities of personal relationships and awareness of the impact offering pastoral care has on oneself. Pastoral care is a non-contractual relationship of care and support, quite different from formal counselling. This should be properly understood. Ideally pastoral work should be supervised, either with a colleague or peers in a regular setting, or a suitably qualified professional.

It is good practice for those engaged in pastoral work to have readily accessible information about the following: local GPs and social services, CAB and Samaritans, suitably qualified counsellors and counselling services. It is important to be clear when it is appropriate to direct people to these agencies.

Sharing this information in Deanery Chapter or LMG, and updating it regularly, will assist newly appointed pastors in your area and highlight its importance.

In pastoral encounters it is good practice to:

- Be aware of your own emotional needs and vulnerabilities and those of the other person, and the dangers of dependency in pastoral relationships.
- Act with compassion and non-judgement while keeping appropriate emotional, psychological and physical distance.
- Be clear as to what sort of help or advice is being sought, and that your involvement is wanted.
- Use the skills which come naturally to you (e.g. listening, empathy) and recognise your limits.
- Discern the right time to bring on-going pastoral support to an appropriate conclusion, thus encouraging maturity and growth.
- Be sensitive to potential manipulation and competitiveness on both sides of the pastoral encounter.
- Seek advice from one of the Advisers in Pastoral Care if you are in any doubt about your own competence to deal with the situation.

The professional aspect of any response to pastoral need requires attention to:

- The timing and venue for meetings.
- Whether others are aware of the meeting taking place or not.
- Whether meetings are to be formal or informal.
- The setting of the meeting: whether its atmosphere, lighting and furnishings are appropriate.
- Inappropriate touching or gestures of affection.
- Being sensitive about the use of first names or terms of endearment.
- The appropriateness of either visiting or being visited alone.

Pastoral situations which should be avoided include:

- Visiting someone alone in their home late at night.
- Arranging for someone to visit when you are alone at home late at night.
- Long-term pastoral relationships with a married person, especially if pastoral care focuses on difficulties in the marriage, when the couple should either be seen together or referred to a suitably qualified couple counsellor.
- Allowing a particular pastoral relationship to endanger the life and well-being of the church and/or the wider community.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an imperative in pastoral work and the following rule applies:

Everything is confidential in pastoral ministry unless it is agreed it can be shared, apart from the exceptions described below.

Maintaining confidentiality in pastoral work includes family, friends or marriage partner, unless informed consent is given. It also applies to what is disclosed to a priest in sacramental confession.

Trust cannot develop in pastoral relationships unless confidentiality is assured. The divulging of any confidence shared, except in particular circumstances (see below), can only take place with the informed consent of the individual.

Supervision or peer support in pastoral work can involve some limited and non-attributed sharing of confidential information. This information should be strictly controlled and those concerned told that such consultations take place to enable the best possible care to be provided.

It is important to respect an individual's right to share personal information with one person and not with another, e.g. within a parish team, but to be aware of the danger of manipulation in such selective sharing, and the risks of undue attachments being formed.

Exceptions to the imperative of confidentiality are when you consider an individual's behaviour or situation threatens the wellbeing of themselves or others. The individual concerned should be told that disclosure to a relevant authority may be a necessity, and in some cases a legal requirement, particularly with regard to the safety of children or vulnerable adults and information about terrorism. Always follow the policy of the diocese (see below) in safeguarding matters.

In summary, with regard to confidentiality, you should:

- assume all personal information is confidential.
- divulge information to agreed third parties only with the individual's consent.
- be aware that when informed consent cannot be obtained, and in your judgment certain information needs to be disclosed, the individual should be informed that such disclosure needs to take place and will take place.
- develop the capacity to distinguish between unhealthy secrecy and appropriate confidentiality.

Safeguarding

For advice and guidance on all safeguarding concerns or suspicions please contact the Safeguarding Team on 01749 670777.

Where the evidence or allegation is clear make an immediate referral to the police, the NSPCC or your local social service department. Always follow the current safeguarding policy of the diocese, which has been issued to all clergy in hard copy, and can be read online on the diocesan website.

Written Records and Reports

The general provisions of confidentiality and informed disclosure applies to written records.

Records of pastoral contacts, and any supervision relating to particular cases, should be kept in such a manner as to be secure, yet clear and open to whom it may concern.

Brief written summaries of pastoral meetings, e.g. what was discussed, decisions made, outcomes looked for, should be made in such a way they can be used as an aide memoire for the pastor, but available for the individual to read if they ask to do so. This material should be kept in a secure place, ideally a locked filing cabinet.

Data Protection Act

All records containing personal information come under the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Keeping such records necessitates registration under the Act. Church Electoral Rolls are exempt. It is still necessary for data processors to comply with the other provisions of the 1998 Act even if manual based records are kept.

You should also be certain you have appropriate security in place regarding access to records kept on your computer, and inform yourself of the Act's provisions under Data Protection.

Further Information

For any other matters concerning confidentiality, records, and the law, consult your Archdeacon in the first instance.