

Clergy Counselling and Wellbeing Policy and Procedures for the Diocese of Bath and Wells

The Counselling and Wellbeing service provides confidential counselling to support clergy and their families in times of personal difficulty. It is a professional, free service and is independent of church structures. Clergy, their spouses, and children can all use the service, which is funded by the diocese and established specifically for individuals, couples, and families. Counselling for couples and families is also available.

The counselling service may be accessed by those in other ministries, e.g., lay readers, chaplains, pioneers, family, and youth workers, however, it must be recognised that funding will be discretionary for these groups of workers and potential clients in these additional roles may be asked to either contribute to or fully fund their counselling. The counselling service is not in general for lay members of a church, although on rare occasions where there has been hurt or abuse caused by church complexity, the Counselling and Wellbeing Adviser may be asked if the service can arrange counselling for an individual.

Funding for any lay person will be agreed through a source other than the counselling budget eg safeguarding or church or personal fund. Wells Cathedral staff may also access the counselling service with a formal referral to the Counselling and Wellbeing Adviser, though, funding will be paid by the cathedral in these cases. The counselling service is not obliged to offer counselling to those in the additional roles mentioned and, in some cases, an adviser will signpost a person to other appropriate services. The purpose of this policy is to set out the scope of the service, accountability, and complaints procedure.

1. The Counselling Service will provide confidential telephone and email access to the Counselling and Wellbeing Adviser.
2. Enquiries for counselling or support will be responded to as soon as possible bearing in mind the service is not an emergency service. There will be times when the Counselling and Wellbeing Adviser is away, however, every effort to inform potential clients by leaving this information on answer phone, or an out of office message, will be made. Once contact is made an appointment, if required, will be made as soon as possible.
3. Counselling assessment, and referrals for counselling to outside self-employed counsellors, will be conducted in appropriate therapeutic settings and adhere to statutory guidelines for ethical and moral good practice.
4. Personal data will be processed fairly and lawfully, be adequate, relevant, and not excessive, accurate and kept up to date in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Records will be kept and destroyed appropriately in accordance with accrediting bodies or by shredding. Any process notes or recording will be kept in a secure and appropriate setting and proper measures taken to secure and protect all information in locked drawers and filing cabinets.

5. It is the responsibility of the Counselling and Wellbeing Adviser and the HR Department to ensure all counsellors have appropriate and up-to-date membership of a recognised and professional body, insurance, DBS certification and are in regular clinical supervision. Counsellors are expected to provide up to date certificates, if this is not provided the diocese may decide to not use their services.
6. All computers used by the Counselling and Wellbeing Adviser and counsellors will be password protected.
7. Names will not be shared with diocesan staff under any circumstances unless it is with the express wish and with written permission from the individual, or when withholding information may put others at risk.
8. Counsellors and the Counselling and Wellbeing Adviser will use the allocated reference number in order to maintain confidentiality.
9. If safeguarding concerns arise within a session, then the Counselling and Wellbeing Adviser should be notified, and they or the counsellor, will follow the appropriate reporting method in the clinical contract of these concerns. Should a child or adult disclose a safeguarding concern that has a direct link to the church then the concern should also be reported to DBF's safeguarding department.
10. 12 sessions will be offered in any one block of work. If a counsellor or client feels there is an urgent necessity to extend the work, the Counselling and Wellbeing Adviser must be informed for ways forward to be sought for extra funding. The diocese cannot be responsible financially for sessions beyond the 12 sessions granted. A client can re-apply for counselling at a later date if necessary.
11. A counsellor can see a client following the initial 12 sessions if funding is sought to extend the therapy. If this is a private arrangement a separate contract needs to be made between the counsellor and the client. The diocese and the Counselling and Wellbeing Adviser withdraw responsibility at this point.

Accountability

1. The Counselling and Wellbeing Adviser will be in regular and appropriate clinical supervision.
2. The Counselling and Wellbeing Adviser will meet with other professionals in similar work to ensure good practice within the Service.
3. The Counselling and Wellbeing Adviser will provide a regular report for the bishop; this will be based on statistical analysis and will not include any personal details.

Complaints Procedure

Both the Counselling and Wellbeing Adviser and all counsellors must adhere to the Ethical Framework for their Professional Awarding Body's Ethical Framework.

Where an individual receiving counselling believes that an alleged breach of professional conduct has occurred, or they have a complaint regarding the service they have received, they should use the following complaints procedure.

Complaints will be dealt with in confidence. The only exceptions to this will be when others could be put at risk by matters referred to in the complaint, or the complaint is of a very serious nature.

Step 1: Informal Complaint

The complainant should approach the individual concerned or the Counselling and Wellbeing Adviser and try to resolve the complaint informally.

If no satisfactory response is received at Step One, then the complainant should move to Step Two.

Step 2: Formal Complaint

The details of the complaint should be put in writing to the Counselling and Wellbeing Adviser. (If the complaint is about the Counselling and Wellbeing Adviser, it should be passed to the Ministry Training Team Leader). The complaint will be acknowledged within seven days of the date it was received. The letter will contain the following information:

- Who is investigating the case
- When the investigation will start

All parties involved in the complaint and its investigation must declare any conflicts of interest. The investigator will make a thorough and confidential investigation of the complaint, contacting both the complainant and the person complained against. Should the investigator be required to interview anyone involved in the complaint, evidence will be taken from each party separately and in a manner which means the parties involved will not come in contact with each other.

Anyone interviewed regarding the complaint is entitled to be accompanied by a supportive person of their choice; however, this person must be independent of the complaint. If a child in counselling has raised concerns about the parent (for example – they don't approve of counselling...) then clearly it wouldn't be appropriate to have that parent present. You could say that due to the confidential nature of the counselling service and personal information disclosed, the investigator reserves the right to ask to speak to the complainant alone or to ask that they be accompanied by a different person if in their opinion it is not appropriate that the accompanying person hear certain details revealed in the counselling. That also protects you in DV cases, for example, where you may have to ask one party to leave in case confidential marital information is to be disclosed.

The Investigator will make a written response to the complainant within 28 days, a copy of which will be sent to the HR department of the diocese and to the person complained against. If it proves not possible to respond within 28 days, the complainant will be informed of any reasons for a delay. All investigations will be completed and responded to; the response will include the following information:

- A summary of the investigation
- A decision on whether the complaint was upheld or not
- What action will be taken as a result of the complaint

The investigating manager may halt the complaint at any stage if it emerges that legal action is under way, pending or intended. The complaints procedure can be halted until any legal process is complete. The investigating manager will be responsible for ensuring that any redress or sanctions are applied and fulfilled.

In the event that a complaint is not resolved satisfactorily by the above complaint procedure, a complaint may be made to the Counselling and Wellbeing Adviser's or the counsellor's awarding body.

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