

# Bath and Wells Spiritual Direction

---

## Guidelines

Spiritual Directors are people of prayer and integrity, who are self-aware and conscious of their own relationship with God. They will be aware of the riches of spiritual wisdom to be found in scripture and in the heritage of faith. Their love for God and their experience of the love of God will enhance their openness in their care for others and enrich their listening and their empathy.

They offer a sacred and safe space to help the Directee deepen their spiritual awareness of themselves and others in any areas of their lives which they wish to share with the Director. In the spiritual direction conversation, the guide is the Holy Spirit, and so the relationship is one of coming alongside another and exploring the movement of God within. Spiritual Directors minister out of their awareness of their own humanity and their consciousness that we all stand in need of God's love and forgiveness.

### The purpose and aims of these guidelines:

'Spiritual Director' is referred to in different churches in different ways, for example, Soul Friend, Accompanier, Soul Mate, Anam Cara. In this document we will be referring to Spiritual Directors and Directees in the context of formal, ongoing one to one meetings.

Spiritual direction is offered with varying levels of formality across the diocese and we do not want to constrain the natural conversations that happen and include spiritual guidance. We also welcome the richness that comes from the fact that neither Spiritual Director nor Directee may be Anglicans. However, where a Spiritual Director is listed and recommended by the Diocese, and the referral between Director and Directee has come through the Diocese, we want to be clear about the expectations and encourage Spiritual Directors on the diocesan referral list to aspire to the highest possible standards of conduct in the exercise of this valuable ministry. This is for the wellbeing of both the Spiritual Director and the Directee, in order to:

- provide a ministry that encourages spiritual direction to be offered with integrity in a way that honours God and enables Directees to grow in their spiritual journey.
- seek to promote the welfare and protection of those with whom Spiritual Directors work, and the Spiritual Directors themselves.
- be clear about the qualities and skills required for spiritual direction, as a process that brings together tools that contribute to the listening, self-understanding and discernment needed for God's ministry of spiritual direction.
- encourage personal and shared ministerial development.
- provide safe and effective boundaries for this ministry.
- identify certain basic minimum standards of behaviour for Spiritual Director and Directee.

In the Diocese Bath and Wells, the Bishops' Adviser for Spiritual Direction provides oversight for the flourishing and safety of this work.

## The Qualities of a Spiritual Director

It is essential that a Spiritual Director facilitates a Directee with great humility and respect, guided by the Holy Spirit. The Director needs to be committed to their own spiritual growth.

The Spiritual Director is a companion who helps the Directee to discern God's presence within, and journeys with the Directee towards a deeper relationship with God. Therefore, a Spiritual Director needs certain qualities to be able to fulfil the role.

1. **Prayer:** The primary requirement is that the person should have an ongoing relationship and commitment to God that is rooted in prayer.
2. **Self-awareness and humility:** A person who recognises their own strengths and limitations and holds the awareness that God is at the centre of the conversation.
3. **Self-restraint:** A person who is focused on the Directee's needs and able to hold the hospitable space in which the spiritual direction conversation can develop.
4. **Learning:** A person who never stops being a learner and is open to new perspectives and continually refreshing their sense of God in their life.
5. **Discernment:** A person who practises good discernment with regard to their own spiritual life.
6. **Sense of Communion:** A person who seeks to exercise their own gifts in the service of the wider church and wider world.
7. **Integrity:** A person who models transparency, integrity and accountability.
8. **Accepting of difference:** A person who recognises that all people are made in the image of God and treat all with respect.

# Mutual Expectations and Guidance

## Between the Diocese and Bath and Wells' Spiritual Directors

We recognise and welcome the fact that neither Spiritual Director nor Directee may be Anglicans. However, where a Spiritual Director is listed and recommended by the Diocese, and the referral has come through the Diocese, these guidelines need to be followed.

### Training

1. The Diocese of Bath and Wells has an annual Equipping for Ministry programme, run by the Training Team and Spiritual Directors are welcome and encouraged to access that programme as part of their ongoing development.
2. The Diocese of Bath and Wells expects that any Spiritual Director listed in the directory will have:
  - a) Had their call to the ministry of spiritual direction affirmed.
  - b) Attended and satisfactorily completed a Spiritual Direction course, either in this diocese or elsewhere and
    - i. If in this diocese, will have been signed off by the Tutors of the course they attended
    - ii. If elsewhere will provide reference(s) from the tutors on that course.
      - a The Diocesan Training Team Leader or The Advisor for Spiritual Direction may also be asked for course details.

(See [Appendix 1](#) for fuller details of what is expected from a training course and the exercise of Spiritual Direction ministry)

### Ethical and Good Practice

The Diocese of Bath and Wells wants Spiritual Directors listed on the register and those they direct to be safe from harm and so they expect that all Spiritual Directors in the directory will:

1. Have completed a registration form and have been accepted as a Bath and Wells Spiritual Director
2. Be receiving spiritual direction themselves not less than four times a year
3. Have been safely recruited, including a DBS check
4. Have kept their safeguarding training up to date based on the requirements established in these guidelines
5. Understand, and follow, issues of good practice, safeguarding and confidentiality ([Appendices 2 and 3](#))
6. Be receiving and engaged with supervision for their ministry either by a trained supervisor or within a peer group. ([Appendix 4](#))
7. Pay attention to their ongoing training and development ([Appendix 5](#))

If, having read the Appendices, you have any questions or concerns about any of the above guidance, please speak with the Bishops' Advisor for Spiritual Direction or in their absence the diocesan Ministry Training and Support Team Leader.

## **APPENDIX 1 - INITIAL TRAINING**

The Exploring Spirituality course is run independently but supported by the Diocese of Bath and Wells. This is not to be regarded as training for spiritual direction but is a good one year starter course.

Following on from this it is expected that those wishing to exercise ministry in this area engage with a Spiritual Direction Course. Various courses are available and the diocesan training team can signpost. This initial training course, whether in Bath and Wells or elsewhere, will have covered many areas but those below are key to the quality of the ministry of Spiritual Direction.

### **Listening**

A Spiritual Director needs to be actively attentive to the Directee.

Effective listening involves observing body language and noticing inconsistencies between verbal and nonverbal messages alongside what is being actually said.

Listening should not include judgment, criticism or advice and should never involve the use of offensive or aggressive language.

### **Reflecting/Summarising**

This flows from listening. The Spiritual Director tentatively highlights the most important points of what they have heard. The purpose is to enable the Directee to explore their interior spiritual journey by being able to pay attention to what they are thinking and feeling.

### **Empathy**

Putting yourself in someone else's position and seeing the Directee's situation from their view.

### **Challenge**

A challenge is a skill to be used with care. And the wisdom is to know when and how. An appropriate challenge gently helps the Directee to become aware of something they have overlooked, or where there is discrepancy or avoidance.

### **Silence**

Creates space for the Directee - for thought, feeling, enlightenment - and can aid discernment.

### **Boundaries**

It is important to realise the boundary between spiritual direction and counselling, mentoring and other 1-2-1 therapies. Be clear about the distinctive nature of this ministry and be willing to assist people to seek appropriate help elsewhere when necessary.

### **Self-awareness**

Reflect regularly on their practice and be self-aware enough to realise that there will be times, due to circumstances, when they need to take a break or withdraw from the spiritual direction role. They will also need to be open to their Supervisor's guidance concerning your fitness to practice.

### **Clarity**

Agree, with the Directee, the length and frequency of sessions, and the process for evaluating and ending the relationship. See the section on Good Practice for outline.

## APPENDIX 2 - GOOD PRACTICE

The Spiritual Director has significant potential power and responsibility which should be exercised with great care to ensure the intention of the relationship and the autonomy of the Directee are not undermined. This involves care in the use of language, in the expression of moral judgements and in the handling of decision-making.

### Legal obligations

- In order to safeguard you and those to whom you offer Spiritual Direction, the Diocese of Bath and Wells requires all Bath and Wells' Spiritual Directors to have an up to date DBS check and the appropriate level of safeguarding training approved by the Diocesan Safeguarding Team

### Information handling

- Contact details are kept with permission from the Directee. Provision should be made, should something happen to the Director, for Directees and Bishops' Adviser for Spiritual Direction to be notified.
- Retained data must be accurate and only used for the purposes for which it has been collected it e.g., to provide Spiritual Direction.
- Any brief notes made following a session, as an aide memoire or for supervision, should be anonymous, show due respect for the Directee and be kept securely, for no longer than necessary and then destroyed/deleted completely.
- Directors should not use a shared e-mail address for their spiritual direction.

### Meeting Basics

- Provide a suitable place that enables spiritual direction to feel safe and not to be interrupted.
- In providing appointments online, this is on a secure connection and conducted in a confidential space.
- Prepare for each session by asking the Holy Spirit to enlighten the meeting. Prior to the session allow adequate time for quiet reflection.
- Offer an initial exploratory meeting - a chance to get to know one another, to discuss what is hoped for and what is offered (see below) and then to decide together whether to continue the Spiritual Direction relationship.

### Mutual agreement at the initial session:

Director and Directee work together in the process of discernment and it is helpful to agree some things at the beginning of the direction relationship - to avoid confusion and conflict and to help navigate it if those arise: E.g.

- **Confidentiality:** see 'Prerequisites for Good Practice'.
- **Reviews:** agreed opportunities to check if the Directee is experiencing the sessions as a safe place; whether the sessions provide opportunity to deepen their relationship with God and grow in their personal spirituality and whether they are able to reflect with the assistance of the spiritual director.
- **Prayer or silence:** consider with the Directee whether active prayer or some silence is helpful in the session, or not.
- **Frequency and length:** agree how often to meet and be clear about the length of sessions.

- **Cancellations:** communicate expectations about prior notice should a cancellation be necessary or if a Directee does not attend.
- **Payment:** discuss payment if required. Many Directors do not charge, but when a charge is made an agreement concerning these matters needs to be clear for mutual respect and understanding. It is worth noting that some Directors use such contributions to pay for their supervision and ongoing ministerial development.
- **Complaints:** if the Directee ever has cause for complaint about their Director they should contact the relevant Referrer in the first instance. If that does not resolve the matter, the Bishops' Adviser for Spiritual Direction should be contacted.
- **Ending the relationship:** discuss how either Directee or Director will indicate if they wish to cease the relationship and how that can be a good ending. It is also good practice for the Director to discuss this with their supervisor.

### Responsibilities of a Spiritual Director

Please see the Process for Resolving Issues between Director and Directee in Appendix 6 as a guide for dealing with issues that may arise .

- Clear and respectful **boundaries** need to be conveyed to the Directee. Spiritual Directors should act at all times in a way that enables the personal and spiritual integrity and wellbeing of the Directee.
- A Spiritual Director must work with an awareness of their own **limitations** of expertise and the boundaries of their role and so will refer the Directee to others where appropriate e.g. a Counsellor.
- A Spiritual Director must be aware of the **power dynamics** of the relationship and keep as their main focus the growth and autonomy of the Directee.
- A Spiritual Director will not ordinarily relate to the Directee in a **crossed role** or separate context (for example as a friend, colleague or supervisor). This enables the Directee to be free in sharing whatever they wish and the Director to respond with objectivity and balance; it also avoids any confusion of roles.
- Should a situation of **conflict** arise between Spiritual Director and Directee, this should be managed with grace, listening carefully to the issues raised and aiming to resolve as far as possible the difficulties within the relationship. If this is not possible, please see Appendix 6 for more detailed guidance on resolving issues.
- A Spiritual Director should never subject a Directee to physical, sexual, psychological, financial, verbal or spiritual abuse or **harassment** and neither should they tolerate such behaviour from a Directee. If either experience such behaviour, they contact the Diocesan Advisor or in some circumstances the Diocesan Safeguarding Team directly. [www.bathandwells.org.uk/safeguarding](http://www.bathandwells.org.uk/safeguarding) who are best placed to deal with matters of abuse or harassment confidentially and compassionately.
- A Spiritual Director should not **touch** the Directee unless prompted appropriately by the Directee and always then with great care. The Director needs to be aware of the influence they carry in a position of trust and not underestimate the complexities of uninvited touch.

- Care needs to be sought not to create **unhealthy dependencies** for themselves or the person to whom they are offering spiritual direction.
- It is fundamental to respect the **rights and dignity** of a Directee's individuality regardless of race, views, nationality, gender, language, marital status, sexual orientation, age, disability or any other stance that could highlight difference or cause discrimination.
- If the Spiritual Director is an Anglican Priest and required to give absolution to a Directee using the Sacrament of Reconciliation, Canon B29 must be adhered to see footnote below.
- There needs to be careful planning for the eventual **ending** of sessions for whatever reason, or any possible period of sabbatical, with the welfare of the Directee always in mind. If circumstances dictate an ending happens outside this remit (due to illness or sudden situations) a Supervisor and the Bishops' Adviser for Spiritual Direction should be informed. As noted in the section on Information Handling, it is the responsibility of Directors to make provision for Directees and the Bishops' Adviser for Spiritual Direction to be notified should something happen to them that prevents them seeing Directees.

## APPENDIX 3 - CONFIDENTIALITY AND SAFEGUARDING

The Diocese of Bath and Wells has a Safeguarding Team and there is information about safeguarding and contacting the team on the diocesan website [www.bathandwells.org.uk/safeguarding](http://www.bathandwells.org.uk/safeguarding)

If you have any questions in relation to safeguarding, then please don't hesitate to ask the team.

A Spiritual Director will need to have knowledge of local and national legal and ethical guidelines - for example in relation to safeguarding - and abide by them.

A Spiritual Director should have completed both the Church of England Safeguarding Basic, Foundation and Leadership courses. These courses must be refreshed every three years.

[Learning and Development | The Church of England](#)

### Exercising Safe Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a critical boundary which establishes trust and a safe place. Matters shared between the Director and Directee should be kept confidential unless a legal obligation is involved. Personal information should not be disclosed without consent from the Directee, except where it is a matter of safeguarding.

In exceptional cases of risk, a Spiritual Director could be required to disclose information to the police or a court of law.

- when a child or vulnerable person is at risk of harm or injury.
- when the Spiritual Director has reason to believe the person is at risk of serious harm to themselves.

In these situations, the Spiritual Director should always inform the Safeguarding Team<sup>1</sup> and the Bishops' Adviser for Spiritual Direction. The Safeguarding Team will then discuss with the Director which authority the case needs to be referred to or whether the Safeguarding Team and Director could work internally to address the concern, as well as an external referral. If the Spiritual Director feels in need of support or supervision around the disclosure, they should contact the Bishops' Adviser for Spiritual Direction.

The Spiritual Director should ideally encourage the person to disclose information themselves to the appropriate authority or agency. However, if this is not possible, the Spiritual Director should then ask the person for permission to pass the information on to the appropriate authority or agency. If permission is not forthcoming, the Spiritual Director should disclose only relevant information to the appropriate authority or agency and inform the Safeguarding Team so that they can take any necessary action.

---

<sup>1</sup> Safeguarding should be informed within one working day of the concern arising.



## **APPENDIX 4 - SUPERVISION**

The Diocese of Bath and Wells expects that Bath and Wells' Spiritual Directors will:

1. be engaged in regular supervision, either on an individual basis with a trained supervisor, a group facilitated by a trained supervisor or peer group supervision
2. where supervision happens within the model of a peer group, be mindful of the balance between new and more experienced directors; to ensure there is sufficient understanding of the appropriate challenges on conscious and unconscious processes and to monitor the quality of the direction being offered
3. be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of these different forms of supervision and select which is appropriate for them at their stage of the ministry
4. understand the importance of not only attending regular supervision but also of participating and engaging in the process.
5. Ensure their directees are aware that they are involved with receiving supervision and brief them as to what it is/isn't

## **APPENDIX 5 - ONGOING TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

The Diocese has an Equipping for Ministry program, run by the Training Team and Spiritual Directors are encouraged to access that programme as part of their ongoing development.

The Diocese expects that any Bath and Wells Spiritual Director will be aware of the importance of ongoing training and development in particular:

1. keeping up to date with the Safeguarding Awareness, Basic, Foundation, Leadership and Spiritual Abuse courses as well as any additional safeguarding requirements that may be introduced.
2. attending training days as offered by the Diocese of Bath and Wells, the South West Spiritual Directors Network (SWSDN) or other organisations.
3. personal reading within the area and issues of spiritual direction.

## APPENDIX 6

# Bath and Wells Spiritual Direction process for Resolving Issues between Director and Directee

---

## Introduction

This process sits alongside the *Bath and Wells Spiritual Direction Guidelines*. We want the experience of Spiritual Direction to be a positive and healthy one for both Directees and Directors. As human beings we are all different: sometimes that leads to creative engagement and at other times can lead to difficult relationships. This process is intended to help us navigate issues that might arise between Spiritual Directors and Directees, so that all can thrive.

For the sake of clarity, the following are mentioned in this document:

- **Spiritual Director:** someone who offers the ministry of Spiritual Direction to individuals and is on the Bath and Wells list of Spiritual Directors
- **Directee:** the person receiving spiritual direction from a Director
- **Referrer:** the person who makes the connection between someone seeking spiritual direction and a potential Spiritual Director. This often happens informally in parishes but in this process, it relates to the three Referrers who make referrals using the Bath and Wells list.
- **Bishops Adviser for Spiritual Direction:** a voluntary position, appointed by the Bishops. The Adviser has oversight of Spiritual Direction within the diocese, acting as a guardian of the vision and of good practice.

From the Directee's perspective:

### Situation 1: Relationship not working:

Spiritual Direction is a relationship that depends on trust, honesty and a sense of connection. As such it is inevitable that sometimes a directee is referred to a potential Spiritual Director and it becomes apparent that the match is not a good one. This should not be a cause of surprise or blame. The Referrers understand that sometimes it will take more than one referral for a directee to find the ideal match. And indeed, sometimes a directee has been with a Spiritual Director for some time, but at some point feels that they need a change. This, again, is natural and referrers are used to making new referrals.

When a Directee has been referred to a Spiritual Director but after a few sessions doesn't feel that they are the right person for them:

- Ideally, the Directee speaks to the Director and lets them know that it does not work for them. This should include why it isn't working, so that the Director can reflect on their own practice.
- If the Directee doesn't feel it is possible to speak directly to the Spiritual Director, then the Directee should go back to the Referrer and ask them to let the Spiritual Director know that they are going to seek an alternative referral and why.
- The Referrer will seek the Directee's permission to share information with the Director; except where the issue is one of safeguarding, in which case (see below) the Safeguarding team will be

consulted. The matter will be logged, and the appropriate action will be taken by the safeguarding team.

- If the Directee is uncomfortable with the Spiritual Director, then it is essential that the Directee lets the Referrer know so that the issue can be followed up.
- If for some reason the Directee doesn't feel able to go back to the Referrer then contact the **Adviser** for Spiritual Direction for assistance.

### **Situation 2: Directee has a concern about the Spiritual Director's practice.**

This is a delicate situation for all involved and our aim is to address concerns raised whilst being mindful of damage to reputations on both sides. It should be possible for this discernment to take place constructively and supportively.

If the concern is to do with **general standards of practice**, please contact the Bishop's Adviser. All concerns will be taken seriously and followed up within our Christian calling to act with compassion to all involved.

1. Initially the Adviser will follow up with informal conversations with both Director and Directee to discover more about what may be happening.
2. If those conversations confirm the concerns, then the Adviser will communicate more formally with the Spiritual Director. At this stage, it is likely that the Adviser will ask the Directee to put their concerns in writing.
3. The Adviser and another diocesan representative will then meet with the Spiritual Director to explore the concerns and any necessary actions. The Spiritual Director is welcome to bring a supporter (e.g. their Supervisor) with them to that meeting, in agreement with the Adviser.
4. If the outcome of the matter of that meeting is not satisfactory, the Diocesan Adviser may remove the Spiritual Director from the Bath and Wells list of Spiritual Directors.

If the concern relates to a **safeguarding matter**: [See the *Guidelines for Spiritual Directors: App.2 Responsibilities of a SD, bullet point 7* - e.g. A Spiritual Director should never subject a Directee to physical, sexual, psychological, financial, verbal or spiritual abuse or harassment.]

- The Adviser will take it to the Diocesan Safeguarding Team who have the right expertise to deal confidentially and compassionately with such concerns
- The **Adviser** will let the Directee and the Referrer know what action has been taken.

## From the Director's Perspective

### **Situation 1: The relationship is not working-**

If a Director feels that they are not the right person to accompany a Directee who has been referred to them.

- The Director should explain to the Directee, as honestly and compassionately as possible, their reasoning for this decision and encourage the Directee to go back to the Referrer, to ensure they are supported in the change and try to link them to another Director as soon as possible.
- The Director should also let the Referrer know.

### **Situation 2: The Director has reason to be seriously concerned for the Directee.**

In all cases our aim is to address concerns raised in a sensitive and supportive way.

The Director should take the issue to a supervision session to explore the best way forward and to fully understand all the underlying issues. With the help and support of supervision the Director may:

- Speak with the Directee about the issue and whether, if appropriate, they would benefit from other support.
- Where possible the Director and the Directee should have a conversation around the place of spiritual direction for the Directee at this time. If the Director is concerned about their ability to continue working with the Directee, then additional supervision support is encouraged.
- If the Director is unable to continue working with the Directee they should follow the process in From the Director's Perspective **Situation 1** above.
- Should there be a Safeguarding issue, the Director should contact the Diocesan Spiritual Direction Advisor and the [Diocesan Safeguarding Team](#).

Latest revision July 2024.  
Next review due July 2025