

These guidelines recognise that Christian pastoral care is fundamentally and intensely relational in nature and practice and offered from the gift of God's love for us and our love for one another.

As such, there is a challenge to balance the desire for best and responsible practice in the worldly and natural realm with Godly wisdom and supernatural involvement in the eternal.

Holding good practice, Biblical principles and God's Kingdom work in creative tension which bring safety and liberation to people and holding the ordinary and extraordinary and the specialist and the non-specialist together under the umbrella of pastoral care, is indeed a challenge which requires the collective wisdom of us all and the continual guidance of God's Holy Spirit.

## 1 GUIDELINES INTENT

### 1.1. These guidelines are intended to be:

- 1.1.1 A resource for churches, denominations and Christian organisations in developing their own Guidelines for Good Practice in Pastoral Care within their local context
- 1.1.2 A resource which encourages pastoral care to be offered with integrity and in a way which honours God and all those involved
- 1.1.3 A resource which will enable individual pastoral care members to be accountable to their local church, denomination or Christian organisation
- 1.1.4 A resource which will hold churches and organisations who hold sole affiliate membership with ACC/Pastoral Care UK (PCUK) accountable (i.e. who are not held accountable by their denomination or an overarching organisational structure)

### 1.2 These guidelines are not intended to:

- 1.2.1 Denote pastoral care as a regulated profession
- 1.2.2 Act as a professional code of ethics and practice for pastoral carers
- 1.2.3 Be part of an ACC/PCUK formal complaints procedure for individual ACC/PCUK members

## 2 DEFINITION AND SCOPE OF PASTORAL CARE

- 2.1 Christian pastoral care is the activity which flows from the attitude and commitment to love one another because we ourselves, are first loved by God
- 2.2 Christian pastoral care is ultimately concerned with developing quality relationships and enabling one another to recognise, follow and become more like Jesus
- 2.3 Christian pastoral care participates in God's missional activity to reconcile the world to Himself
- 2.4 Christian pastoral care embraces a wide range of activity in support of one another, in and beyond the Church i.e. in gathered and dispersed church
- 2.5 Christian pastoral care might involve: sustaining others through prolonged difficulty or immediate need, enabling the journey of healing and wholeness, considering the process of reconciliation with God, self and others, offering guidance about other resources and enabling different perspectives
- 2.6 Christian pastoral care might take the form of: listening, encouraging, visiting, hospitality, advocacy, mentoring, befriending, celebrating, practically helping, prayer, comforting, enabling

**2.7** Christian pastoral care might happen: formally in planned and organised ways or informally through everyday spontaneous moments

**2.8** Christian pastoral care might be offered by an individual, by small groups, through a particular ministry, through an outreach project, by one church or a group of churches

### **3 DEFINITION OF A CHRISTIAN PASTORAL CARER**

**3.1** A Christian Pastoral Carer is someone who either formally, as part of a pastoral team, group or network or informally, as part of their fellowship group or everyday relationships in the community, offers care and support to another, in the knowledge of being loved themselves by God and in the hope of sharing that love with others

**3.2** Christian Pastoral Carers might be seen as part of the ALL, SOME and FEW of the Body of Christ

**3.2.1 The 'All'** - All Christians have a God given responsibility to 'care' for others – this is a quintessential aspect of the outworking of what it means to be a member of the Body of Christ. Its emphasis is upon growing and maintaining a Christ centred loving relationship with others, and it mostly happens in informal and often unplanned ways. The ALL help to grow pastoral churches or communities which care for others in organic ways, rather than within formalised pastoral structures or systems.

**3.2.2 The 'Some'** - Some Christians are particularly gifted and called by God to provide pastoral care in a more focussed way. This might include offering and providing pastoral care in more planned or formal ways, perhaps as part of a dedicated team of pastoral carers. It might involve the Pastoral Carer undertaking training and / or developing knowledge, insights, skills and expertise in pastoral care at a greater depth than 'the all'. The SOME use their gifts for the good of the whole body.

**3.2.3 The 'Few'** - A few Christians are particularly called and gifted to resource, lead or co-ordinate the work of pastoral care in planned, structured and formalised ways. The FEW may have specialist knowledge, experience and skill to enable, encourage and equip the pastoral care work of 'the all' and 'the some', and provide them with for example, training, leadership, help to reflect on their practice and support.

### **4 TERMS USED**

**4.1 Pastoral Care:** Care being provided by Christians in a variety of contexts – as used in this document it does **not** include the wider secular use of 'pastoral' e.g. as in pastoral tutor

**4.2 Person:** For the sake of brevity the word 'person' is used to indicate the person being cared for

**4.3 Pastoral Carer:** a Christian who provides pastoral care to another person who may or may not hold a Christian faith

**4.4 Note on Spiritual Direction:** In some Church / Denominational traditions Spiritual Direction might be seen as a separate function of a few specifically trained people some of whom will use the title Spiritual Director

**4.5 Note on Counselling:** Counselling is a specialised function which requires specialised training, involves a contractual agreement between the counsellor and his/her client, and is subject to a separate Code of Ethics and Practice – see ACC Code of Ethics and Practise for Counselling

## **5 BIBLICAL VALUES FOR PASTORAL CARE**

- 5.1** Pastoral Carers are called to value each person as created uniquely in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), with purpose, potential and capacity to live life to the full (John 10:10)
- 5.2** Pastoral Care that is inspired and enabled by Christ will contribute towards:
- 5.2.1** the equipping of God's people so they can do His work, so that the Church, the Body of Christ, can be built up, until we come to unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son, that we will be mature and full grown in the Lord ..... so that the whole Body is healthy and growing and full of love (e.g. Ephesians 4:11-16)
  - 5.2.2** the mission work of the Church (e.g. John 17:20-23; Acts 2:44-47; Acts 6:1-7)
- 5.3** Pastoral Carers are called to love others through Christ-like love (John 13:34-35, Romans 12:10; Romans 13:8), led and living by the Holy Spirit, manifesting the fruit of the Holy Spirit and informed by the indwelling Word of God (Galatians 5:13–26 and Colossians 3:12-17)
- 5.4** Pastoral Carers are called to be burden bearers and burden sharers with and for others, whilst not creating dependency or denying the person their responsibilities and capabilities (Galatians 6:1–5)
- 5.5** Pastoral Carers are called to relate to others with an emphasis more on listening than speaking, and to be mindful and careful of the words that they speak (James 1:19–27; Proverbs 18:19)
- 5.6** Pastoral Carers are called to exercise confidentiality and discretion (Proverbs 11:13; Proverbs 20:19)

## **6 ETHICAL VALUES FOR PASTORAL CARE**

- 6.1** Pastoral Carers will be careful to respect the rights and dignity of every person as a unique individual, equal with them in the sight of God and regardless of race, religion, nationality, language, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, age, size, employment, income, disability, health, abode, or criminal record
- 6.2** Pastoral Carers will seek to accept and not judge a person and to allow them the safety, freedom and space to express themselves and to make their own decisions without force or manipulation, even when they disagree with the persons thinking, actions and life style
- 6.3** Pastoral Carers will be careful to ensure that they do not misuse or abuse the trust that is bestowed upon them by a person
- 6.4** Pastoral Carers will not subject any person to physical, psychological, verbal or spiritual harassment and will not tolerate such behaviour by others. Harassment can include physical, psychological, emotional, sexual or spiritual abuse including insults, unwelcome sexual behaviour, language or jokes, display of offensive materials, words, pictures, symbols, behaviour, gestures, or signals
- 6.5** Pastoral Carers will not exploit people they are helping financially, sexually, emotionally, or in any other way
- 6.6** Pastoral Carers will be careful not to create unhealthy dependencies for either themselves or the persons to whom they are offering pastoral care
- 6.7** Pastoral Carers will maintain confidentiality, understanding that confidentiality does not necessarily mean secrecy (see Section 7 below)
- 6.8** Pastoral Carers will ensure that the person is safeguarded as far as is practically reasonable and that appropriate steps are taken to seek appropriate medical, legal or other professional assistance where required (refer to section 8 in relation to safeguarding responsibilities)

Pastoral Carers will seek to be honest and open and act with integrity

- 6.9** Pastoral Carers will seek to hold appropriate boundaries and be confidently assertive when required without aggression

## **7 CONFIDENTIALITY**

- 7.1** Confidentiality is a critical boundary which protects the privacy of the person and the integrity of pastoral work, in our church or organisation
- 7.2** Confidentiality ensures the information a person reveals to us is not disclosed to anyone else, without the person's prior knowledge and consent, apart from exceptional circumstances where safeguarding is necessary
- 7.3** Confidentiality establishes trust and a safe space for a person and for God to work
- 7.4** Confidentiality however, does not need to be confused with secrecy i.e. concealing information which could be significantly harmful to others or collusion i.e. explicitly or inherently cooperating with illegal or unethical behaviour
- 7.5** Exceptions to confidentiality include when:
- 7.5.1** the Pastoral Carer has been required by legislation or a Court of Law to disclose certain information either to the Police or the Court
  - 7.5.2** the Pastoral Carer has reason to believe that others, particularly a child or vulnerable person, are or maybe, at risk of harm or injury
  - 7.5.3** the Pastoral Carer has reason to believe that the person is at risk of harming themselves
- 7.6** In the exceptional cases of 7.5.2 and 7.5.3 the Pastoral Carer, if they are not placing themselves at risk, should encourage and support the person to disclose information themselves to the appropriate bodies, authorities or agencies. If this is not possible, the Pastoral Carer should seek the person's permission for them to pass information on to any appropriate bodies, authorities or agencies. If this is not forthcoming the Pastoral Carer should disclose information, which is only on a need to know basis, to the appropriate bodies, authorities or agencies without the person's consent
- 7.7** Pastoral Carers working in a formal pastoral care role need to make a person aware of the boundaries of confidentiality from the onset of any care or support offered
- 7.8** Pastoral Care offered informally in the everyday contexts of life, needs to assume that what is spoken by the person is to be kept confidential. Where there is any doubt, the Pastoral Carer needs to assume responsibility for clarifying this e.g. would the person like their situation to be kept confidential, be prayed for by a group of intercessors who would keep their details confidential or do they want it in the weekly news sheet!
- 7.9** Confidentiality in pastoral care might need at times, to be worked out not only by the Pastoral Carer and the person being cared for but with church leaders, organisational managers, pastoral team coordinators, other pastoral carers, the person's family members and friends, the Pastoral Carer's own family members and friends, prayer groups, fellowship groups
- 7.10** Confidentiality guidelines for various individuals and groups, might involve formal written guidelines policies and procedures, explicit verbal explanations, inherent role modelling
- 7.11** Confidentiality also extends to any written or electronic records and the safeguarding of these to protect the privacy of the person

- 7.12** Written or electronic records should only be kept for the specific purpose and time needed. They need to be accurate, up to date, adequate, relevant and not excessive in relation to the purpose for which they are intended and where appropriate without any identifiable information
- 7.13** Care should be taken about access to and use of shared computers, backup systems and emails, i-pads, mobile phones, social networks, photocopying, faxing and shredding. It can be, for instance, a breach of confidentiality to copy others into certain e-mails when the person has not given their permission for you to do so and where they contain personal content, or to leave a letter inadvertently in the photocopier, or to leave a thank you card visible to others which give away information about a person cared for
- 7.14** Churches and organisations need to be aware of their responsibilities under any current data protection legislation

## **8 DUAL RELATIONSHIP'S**

- 8.1** There are times when Pastoral Carers may hold another relationship with the person they are caring for e.g. a pastoral listener might also be a health care professional in the community and the boundary of another relationship needs to be preserved by arranging for another Pastoral Carer to be involved
- 8.2** In some instances the dual relationship might be useful in terms of having a holistic overview of the person's situation but in this instance, the Pastoral Carer has the responsibility for ensuring that the person is comfortable with the dual roles, they are comfortable themselves with the dual roles and for managing confidentiality in the different contexts

## **9 CARE FOR THE PASTORAL CARER**

- 9.1** Pastoral Carers need to ensure they are taking care of their own health and well-being as they offer care to others. This includes ensuring they are obtaining sufficient rest, exercise and sleep and are looking after their own relationships. It also includes ensuring they have sufficient regular space to grow in relationship with God, mature in faith and develop self-awareness themselves through reflective practice
- 9.2** Pastoral Carers need to ensure they are not working out of their depth in a detrimental way to themselves or the person, that they are working within their abilities and competencies and that they are prepared to refer or signpost a person to others when needed
- 9.3** Pastoral Carers need to take responsibility for ensuring they are identifying and undertaking training which is relevant to their work. Pastoral Care UK has various training resources available to support individuals, churches and organisations with training ([www.pastoralcareuk.org](http://www.pastoralcareuk.org))
- 9.4** Pastoral Carers need to ensure the person for whom they are caring, is aware they are not offering counselling and need to be prepared to refer a person to a counsellor where needed and desired
- 9.5** If the Pastoral Carer is a trained counsellor he/she should discuss this with their counselling supervisor before offering to provide the person with counselling themselves and shifting the relationship into a formal counselling agreement. In such circumstances the Pastoral Carer needs to ensure that the person understands the contractual/formalised boundaries and conditions of counselling
- 9.6** Pastoral Carers who are regularly providing formal pastoral care as one of the 'some' or the 'few' in a designated role, should be accountable to their church or organisation and be resourced themselves through regular, appropriate oversight and support for their pastoral care work
- 9.7** It is essential that confidentiality is maintained within any oversight / support / supervisory arrangement for the Pastoral Carer and therefore careful consideration needs to be given to the most appropriate source of such support. For some it may be more appropriate to access support from outside their own church congregation to help ensure that confidentiality is not compromised

- 9.8** Pastoral Carers need to feel safe themselves and in some instances have a right to decline offering care and or seeing someone on their own e.g. with a person who is under the influence of alcohol or drugs or who are 'acting out' aggressively
- 9.9** Pastoral Carers should not offer care to a person when their own functioning is impaired due to personal or emotional difficulties, illness, alcohol, drugs or for any other reason
- 9.10** Pastoral Carers who are working formally may want to ensure their church has adequate insurance to cover their activities or to take out their own indemnity insurance with a suitable insurance company

## **10 SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND VULNERABLE ADULTS**

- 10.1** Every church, denomination and Christian organisation should have a clear, written, Safeguarding Policy for Children and Vulnerable Adults, which includes a requirement that every person who the church, denomination or Christian organisation has formally nominated as a Pastoral Carer or child / young person's worker, undergoes a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check
- 10.2** ACC/PCUK strongly recommends that churches, denominations and Christian organisations seek independent guidance on the creation and ongoing maintenance of their Safeguarding Policy for Children and Vulnerable Adults, from a specialist safeguarding advice agency such as the Churches Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS [www.ccpas.co.uk](http://www.ccpas.co.uk)) who will also advise on best practice according to current legislation, directives and understandings
- 10.3** Pastoral Carers who are called to provide pastoral care to Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults must do so within the guidelines of their Church's, denominations or Christian organisations Safeguarding Policies and Procedures and should be made aware of these and receive appropriate safeguarding training
- 10.4** Pastoral Carers need to be aware of the person who holds the safeguarding role in their church, denomination or Christian organisation, how and where to access them and when it is appropriate to do so
- 10.5** If a Pastoral Carer receives a confession or allegation of abuse or has any reason to suspect that a child or vulnerable adult has in the past been abused, or might be at risk of abuse or is currently being abused, they must act promptly within their Churches, denominations or Christian organisations Safeguarding Policies and Procedures

## **11 COMPLAINTS**

- 11.1** Individual pastoral care members of ACC/PCUK are required to demonstrate that they are working with a Framework for Good Practice in Pastoral Care within their church, denomination or Christian organisation which does not contravene Pastoral Care UK's Guidelines for Good Practice in Pastoral Care. Where such a Framework does not exist the individual will be required to adopt Pastoral Care UK's Guidelines and will need to declare they are still working to these at the point of membership renewal
- 11.2** ACC/PCUK does not receive and respond to complaints made against its individual pastoral care members and recognises that it is the responsibility of the church, denomination or Christian organisation to receive and address complaints brought against their pastoral workers
- 11.3** Churches, denominations and Christian organisations affiliated to ACC/PCUK are required to demonstrate that they are working with a Framework for Good Practice in Pastoral Care within their church, denomination or organisation, which does not contravene Pastoral Care UK's Guidelines for Good Practice in Pastoral Care. Where such a Framework does not exist the affiliate will be required to adopt Pastoral Care UK's Guidelines and will need to declare they are still working to these at the point of membership renewal

**11.4** ACC/PCUK does not receive and respond to complaints made against an affiliated church or organisation for its pastoral work and recognises that it is the responsibility of the central denomination or organisation to receive and address complaints brought against its churches or branch organisations

**11.5** ACC/PCUK does support individuals, churches, denominations and Christian organisations in developing Good Practice through making these Guidelines available and through training and support

**11.6** ACC/PCUK does hold a complaints process for sole affiliated churches or organisations who are not accountable to a denominational structure or wider organisational structure and where the complaint is about the churches or organisations actions or their handling of a complaint of one of their pastoral workers

**11.7** ACC/PCUK does hold a complaints process for Pastoral Care UK's Regional Trainers

## **12 PASTORAL CARE UK AND ACC**

12.1 Pastoral Care UK is part of the Association of Christian Counsellors

12.2 Whilst pastoral care is seen as distinctive to counselling it draws upon the rich counselling heritage of the organisation to inform its practice

12.3 Individuals, churches and organisations who become members of Pastoral Care UK therefore would be expected not to contravene ACC's Ethics and Practice in respect of counselling or its promotion

*Pastoral Care UK is always seeking to enable 'Good Practice' and is open to developing these Guidelines with others wisdom and experiences*

Pastoral Care UK is part of the Association of Christian Counsellors.  
[www.pastoralcareuk.org](http://www.pastoralcareuk.org)



**Association of Christian Counsellors,  
29 Momus Boulevard, Coventry, CV2 5NA  
Tel: 0845 124 9569, [www.acc-uk.org](http://www.acc-uk.org)  
Email: [office@acc-uk.org](mailto:office@acc-uk.org).**