



Pastoral Care and Counselling

The Diocese of Coventry is committed to doing all it can to support the wellbeing of clergy and their families, and diocesan employees.

November 2021

WELLBEING

Bishop Christopher and I are fully aware that to honour God's call in our lives, we need to ensure, as far as is humanly possible, that we are healthy in body, mind and spirit. If we are to be and to remain resourced and energised for ministry, it is essential to make time for study, rest and recreation. The most important vocation is to be and to become the one God has called us to be.

'Keeping watch over ourselves' (*Acts 20:28*) and 'paying close attention to ourselves' (*1 Timothy 4:16*) includes every aspect of ourselves – spiritual, physical, mental and emotional. It is how we keep ourselves fit for the Lord's service.

Licensed clergy, their partners/families, and DBF employees may, like anyone else, face relationship problems, bereavement, stress, anxiety, depression, illness or other challenging life events. Having additional support available can make a huge difference.

Bishop John

COUNSELLING

Professional counselling (in accordance with the Ethical Framework of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy) is offered by the diocese to licensed clergy, their families and DBF employees who feel they may benefit from it.

You do not need to be in crisis to benefit from counselling.

Seeking help is a sign of courageous maturity and not a sign of weakness.

Counselling:

- Gives you time and space to look at personal issues.
- Can help you understand and value yourself more.
- Is not about giving you advice.
- Is about understanding your patterns of behaviour, defences and ways of coping so you can find a way through the issues you face.

Sessions are offered on a weekly or fortnightly basis.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

Counselling is available to licensed clergy, their spouse/civil partner and dependent children, and to DBF employees. Others associated with the diocese may be referred to the counselling team by a member of the Bishop's Core Staff Team.

HOW TO ACCESS

Contact can be made directly with the Diocesan Counsellor, Heather Vernon.

heather.vernon@covcofe.org

07960 879406

Third-party referrals may be made on your behalf (for example by a line manager or member of the Bishop's Core Staff Team). No information will be passed back to the referrer without the client's written agreement.

Referrals can be made to other therapists as some clients may prefer a male therapist or may be best-suited to a particular form of therapy, such as couple-counselling or art/play therapy. Initial contact should still be through the Diocesan Counsellor who can make the necessary arrangements with regard to funding.

FUNDING

The Diocese has committed to funding both the initial assessment and enough sessions for the vast majority of people to achieve a positive outcome.

While there is a limit to the number of sessions we fund, it may be extended in special circumstances or you may choose to arrange to continue to see your counsellor on a private basis.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Counselling depends on building a relationship of trust within which it is safe to explore personal issues so confidentiality is vital. Your name and any other identifying characteristics will not be shared with anyone within the diocese. Each client is allocated a unique ID reference number which is used for payment of fees. The Diocesan Counsellor is the only person who will know the link between the reference and your name.

If it is considered necessary to involve another professional (such as your GP or a statutory agency) this will be done, wherever possible, with your agreement and after discussion with your counsellor. This would only occur in situations where there is a serious concern for your wellbeing or the wellbeing of others.

OTHER SOURCES OF HELP

There are many places you can go to receive help and support:

- **Your GP**
- [NHS Mental Health Services](#)
- [NHS Drug Addiction Services](#)
- [Action on Addiction](#) – charity providing treatment, research and family support
- [The Sheldon Hub](#) – an online community of mutual support for clergy, ordinands and their families.
- [Light House Christian Care Ministry](#) – a Christian counselling service based in Coventry.
- [Keeping Health in Mind](#) – a Christian mental health charity based in Coventry.
- [The Well Christian Healing Centre](#) – based in Leamington.
- [Mind](#) – a national mental health charity providing advice and support.
- [Samaritans](#) – a safe place to talk. You do not have to be suicidal to contact Samaritans.
- [British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy](#)
- [The Association of Christian Counsellors](#)
- [Diocese of Coventry Clergy Wellbeing overview](#) – further information about mentoring, sabbaticals, retreats and sources of help and support.
- **Archdeacon Pastor** ([Sue Field](#))
- **Your line manager, the Director of Operations** ([Stephen Davenport](#)), or **Diocesan Secretary** ([Ruth Marlow](#)) – diocesan employees are encouraged to speak to a colleague in confidence