



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.

May 2022

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 and the ethical framework of the Association of Christian Counsellors) is offered by the diocese to clergy and their families.

Counselling for DBF employees may be offered if there are personal problems which are affecting their ability to carry out their role effectively and need advice or support. DBF employees should refer to the Staff Handbook or speak to their line manager or the Director of Operations for further information.

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 and their families, 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.

DBF Employees will be referred on the approval of the Diocesan Secretary.

People directly involved in a safeguarding enquiry will be referred by the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser.

HOW TO ACCESS

Licensed clergy and their families can make contact directly with the Diocesan Counsellor, Heather Vernon.

For DBF staff, if approved, HR will make a referral to Maria.

Referrals for those directly involved in a safeguarding enquiry will be made by the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser.

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

maria.laxton@hotmail.co.uk

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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 by Maria Laxton or HR (for DBF staff) 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.
- [Diocese of Coventry Clergy Wellbeing overview](#) – further information about mentoring, sabbaticals, retreats and sources of help and support.
- **Archdeacon Pastor**
- **Your line manager, the Director of Operations, or Diocesan Secretary** – diocesan employees are encouraged to speak to a colleague in confidence if they are experiencing difficulties.