

Diocesan guidance for prayer and healing ministries in our worshipping communities.

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Who is this guidance for?

- **This guidance applies to all PCCs** where there are clergy, readers and those in pastoral prayer ministry in people's homes, in churches, benefices, at activities and events.
- PCCs must ensure that such ministries are only be undertaken by those authorised to do so, at parish and/or diocesan levels as appropriate.
- PCCs must also ensure that these ministries are only undertaken in accordance with Safer Recruitment and Safeguarding guidance and requirements
<https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/safeguarding-e-manual/safer-recruitment-and-people-management-guidance>
<https://www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/safeguarding>
- It is very important that everyone involved follows the House of Bishops' Guidelines for Good Practice in the Healing Ministry.
<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-01/house-of-bishops-guidelines-for-good-practice-in-the-healing-ministry.pdf>
- Some people might talk or ask about The Ministry of Deliverance sometimes referred to as exorcisms. This is quite distinct from the ministries of Prayer, or Healing. No unauthorised person should be undertaking this ministry. This is a complex issue, and any ministry of this kind is specifically restricted to those to whom the Bishop has specifically authorised to give advice and guidance. If you have any questions about this please talk to your parish clergy who will seek further advice from the Bishop's Chaplain, Canon Stuart Currie: bishopschaplain@cofe-worcester.org.uk
- The parish clergy should always be the senior leadership for any prayer and healing ministry in a worshipping community, even if some others locally are delegated to coordinate and oversee practice and training.

What does prayer for healing and wholeness mean?

The search for healing and wholeness is one of the most profound characteristics of human existence. The Christian understanding of healing is not the same as a cure: it does not try to patch up, repair, recreate or revert something or someone to a former state. In the light of Christian faith, reconciliation and healing involve God's grace bringing about change, development and new ways of being, whether within the individual person or the wider society. These processes and transformations are inextricably linked with the gospel message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, and our growth into holiness and wholeness in his image, in the context of eternity.

(The Reverend Dr Beatrice Brandon DD the Archbishops' Adviser for the Healing Ministry)

We are all a blend of the spiritual, the mental and the physical so in all our ministries we it is important to have a holistic approach and consider mental and physical health and wellbeing alongside spiritual health and wellbeing.

How and where is this ministry exercised?

- Prayer and healing ministries are exercised in a wide variety of ways across the Diocese. In this ministry, people are supported and served at difficult times in their lives which can range from bereavement, illness, family or other personal issues,
- Ministries can take place in church during or after a service, in another venue or event, in people's own homes, on the streets...
- In any situation, much thought and care should be given as to how such ministries are undertaken as safely, responsibly, and prayerfully as possible, remembering that many people who come for prayer are vulnerable or who make themselves vulnerable by asking for ministry.

How do PCCs safely recruit and support people for these ministries?

- Every PCC will need to ensure that it has appropriate mechanisms for recruiting people to these ministries. This includes safer recruitment processes, safeguarding checks where appropriate, and training and support. These should be led by the parish clergy and the parish safeguarding officer and/or other clearly delegated people.
- PCCs should follow national Church of England guidance for safer recruitment, undertake DBS checks as appropriate, and ensure there is adequate supervision and support in place.
- When planning such ministries, PCCs may develop a local policy on when such ministry is undertaken, how many people, where and when; how risks are managed, any legal issues, GDPR, and so on. Best practice is for prayer ministry teams to include men and women

- Guidance for the recruitment of prayer ministers can be accessed here - [Requirements of a volunteer engaged in Healing Prayer Ministry.](#)

<https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/safeguarding-e-manual/safer-recruitment-and-people-management-guidance>

What is good practice for those exercising these ministries? Please note:

The guidance below is to give PCCs and clergy an example of good practice and not intended to be a substitute for approved training, which all those engaged in prayer ministry should undertake. Please see links on the diocesan website for available training courses.

A Healing Prayer Minister will -

- Avoid diagnosing and offering advice and quick suggestions regarding what they think the prayer seeker might need or making promises for a 'quick fix'. The role is rather to enable an encounter with God and offering to walk with an individual on their road to becoming the person God created them to be. Prayer ministry is not counselling or Spiritual Direction.
- Listen to the prayer seeker and seek to understand by reflecting back or asking open, not leading, questions. The process of sharing a story in this way can help a prayer seeker understand their needs more deeply. Prayer should be for what the prayer seeker is asking, cues taken from them and using their language. It is important that the prayer seeker feels in control and free to decline any suggestion for prayer. And that nothing is said or done that is against their will or coerces them in any way. It is always helpful to understand how the prayer seeker feels about God and how they like relate to God, as Father or Jesus for example. This guides prayer for them.
- Listen to God. Any words, scriptures, pictures that may be from God are offered as suggestions, never 'This is what God is saying to you'. A prayer minister will never declare that someone has been healed – this is for the prayer seeker to discern.
- Listen to themselves, aware of their own issues or experiences that may seek influence what they say. Not impose judgement on the prayer seeker and avoid showing shock. Be mindful of the messages they may send through facial expressions and body language. Be mindful of personal hygiene.
- Keep the language used simple and jargon free, never using language that might imply the prayer seeker lacks faith, or that they have an evil spirit.
- Leave space for prayerful reflection for prayer seeker and minister to discern anything being given by God.
- Always pray with eyes open to be aware of how the prayer seeker may be affected by the Holy Spirit or by their own thoughts and emotions. Check how the prayer seeker is feeling and what they are sensing.
- Physical touch – this can be a problem for some people. Permission from the prayer seeker should always be sought before the laying on of hands, anointing with oil, or hugging. Laying on of hands should be limited to the head, shoulders or arms.
- Never advise anyone to give up taking any prescribed medication.

- Observe confidentiality - ensure a high level of confidentiality but know its limits and how to explain these. All prayer ministers should be DBS checked and safeguarding trained knowing what to do if an issue of safeguarding arises.
- Recognise where someone may be suffering from mental health problems and know what to do if concerned for them, especially if concern is for their immediate safety.
- Not engage in deep prayer ministry with people who have suffered childhood abuse, acute trauma or Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID), for examples, unless they have the appropriate training and experience
- Always work in pairs, ideally one male and one female within sight and audible reach of other adults.
- In a street setting, always ensure that there are witnesses.
- Always prepare for ministry in prayer.
- At the end of ministry, leave the prayer seeker feeling comfortable, giving them into God's love and protection.

A Prayer Minister's responsibility to look after themselves -

- To look after their own spiritual welfare and prayer life and be aware of their own issues.
- In times of personal difficulty, or illness it may be wise to step back from this ministry temporarily.
- Stop ministering if they feel out of their depth or too personally affected by issues raised and take advice.
- To debrief after a prayer ministry session with a prayer partner is important in keeping accountable to good practice guidance. A prayer minister may need further help or support to process what they might have heard or emotions that might have been triggered for them. This should be done without breaking the confidentiality of the prayer ministry.
- It is important to maintain appropriate boundaries at all times and be aware if a prayer seeker is becoming dependent on a prayer minister

What a prayer minister should do if they have concerns about anyone.

- Any safeguarding concern should be reported immediately to the Parish Safeguarding Officer or a member of clergy. Guidance given in safeguarding training about handling such a situation should be followed.
- Any other concerns at any stage or if things become too difficult or complex must be reported immediately to the parish clergy (or named delegated other person).

Where to seek further advice and guidance

Canon Stuart Currie, Bishop's Chaplain: bishopschaplain@cofe-worcester.org.uk

Diocese of Worcester Safeguarding Team

<https://www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/safeguarding/contact-the-team/>

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