**Ruscombe and Twyford Pastoral Care Policy**

1. **Pastoral Care.**

Pastoral Care is a fundamental ministry of the church, which consists of ‘helping acts done by representative Christian persons’, both ordained and lay. It is exercised in many different ways, including the sacramental ministries of confession and reconciliation, baptism, marriage, eucharist as well as caring for the bereaved and any parishioners in need. The aim is to help people live life in all its fullness, in the strength of and according to the example of Christ. In the words of 1 Peter 5: 2, we are encouraged to be shepherds of the flock that God has given us. All congregation members should show care and concern for those around them both within the church community and those they meet in the course of their daily life.

The Christian faith calls us to love and minister to others (Jn 13: 34). We are also called into being community, which is a mutual state, reminding us that at times, we are the ones in need of care. Every person and creature has been made by God for ‘communion’, and we need to work towards that as much as possible. Pastoral situations can include opportunities to participate in social justice or can have a mission / outreach flavour. The guiding principles are: respect, dignity, privacy, recognition, affirmation and the rights that all people have.

1. **Pastoral Care Team.**

It is good practice to train and authorise specific people who have an interest and gifting in pastoral care who can undertake visiting on behalf of the church, and work on a voluntary basis in accordance with practical and ethical guidelines. The team consists of the Benefice clergy and a group of Lay Pastoral Assistants, one of whom is the Team Leader. They will act ‘on behalf of’ the church, and will also be a resource for all church members to consult. Many LPAs will also be involved in other ‘caring’ roles in the church and have opportunities to make contact with people at times of change in their lives.

There is a careful balance to be achieved between the LPA’s working independently and being part of the team. Most new ‘referrals’ will come via the parish office and the team co-ordinator. The team will meet regularly for group supervision, discussion, and update training. Visits are likely to take place in the person’s home, a care home or hospital. Prayer might be offered, and some LPAs will be authorised to give Home Communion.

1. **Lay Pastoral Assistants: qualities and requirements.**

LPAs will:

* Be established members of the congregations, with a well-grounded and developing Christian faith and commitment.
* Be known for their empathy and care of others through words, actions, and prayer, but especially by their listening skills. They will not be offering ‘counselling’.
* Be respectful of 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.
* Be able to work with those in distress.
* understand confidentiality and boundaries, and make mature judgements.
* possess self-awareness and be willing to reflect on life in the light of church teaching.
* work creatively and collaboratively in the team.

All LPAs:

* Will be accountable to the Incumbent and PCC
* Will undertake the necessary training and be committed to personal development.
* Will be subject to DBS checks (Enhanced for Vulnerable Adults, not Barring)
* Will be committed to good practice, including safeguarding children, young people, and vulnerable adults.
* Will adhere to the Pastoral Recording policy (appendix 2).

All LPAs will be provided with

* Team meetings
* Regular support and group supervision, including opportunity for 1:1 if requested.
* Opportunities to ‘withdraw’ when personal circumstances indicate a break is required.
* Reasonable expenses, where required, with prior agreement with Pastoral Team Leader
* Guidance and support in risk assessment when conducting home visits.
* A team handbook, containing useful resources, contact details, procedures, prayer resources.

1. **Safer Working procedures**
2. Any new ‘referral’ unknown to the team/ congregation will be examined *in a proportionate way* using the Home Visiting Risk Assessment Checklist (Appendix 1).
3. The team co-ordinator and office should keep an up-to-date list of all LPA’s and their contact numbers, kept on churchsuite.
4. The Lone Working policy should be followed.
5. All visits should normally be pre-booked.
6. For an initial visit, or if there are concerns, consideration should be given to going with another member of the team or asking to meet the person somewhere neutral, such as a café.
7. All LPAs should consider any background information regarding risk, any possible misinterpretation of the suggested place or time of the visit, and also whether they themselves are under stress or more vulnerable for any reason.
8. All LPAs should carry a mobile phone (which is familiar to use and is charged) and details of their emergency contact. They should consider leaving details of their destination with a family member/ at their house.
9. In a ‘new’ environment, exits should be noted and kept within easy access.
10. They should rely on their instinct if they feel uneasy during a visit, or if the person becomes ‘unstable’ in any way, find an immediate ‘reason’ to leave without panic.
11. In situations like 6 or after any untoward incident or concern, or near-miss, the LPA should seek support and advice from another team member/ the team leader/ clergy.
12. The safety and well-being of the team is vitally important. It is recognised that even simple encounters can sometimes raise issues for LPAs – support should be sought and offered.
13. **Recording and Safeguarding**

All clergy and LPAs are expected to adhere to current procedures for Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults. Contact with children and young people under 18 will be incidental and not 1:1.

All clergy and LPAs should submit monthly returns of their records (see Recording Pastoral Encounters Appendix 2). These records will be kept locked in the parish office.

**March 2024**

**Appendix 1 Home Visiting Risk Assessment Checklist**

If you are visiting someone for the first time, and particularly if it is someone you don’t know, please take some time first to consider whether there could be any particular risks.  If possible, try to talk first to someone who knows the individual concerned and may be able to provide some background.

This checklist should be considered by the person taking the initial referral, or Pastoral Team Leader, and filled in as far as possible. The form should be handed on to the visitor(s) for full completion. No visit should be undertaken without due attention to this document.

If there are serious concerns, then further discussion with the team/ incumbent might indicate that a home visit shouldn’t be undertaken. Anyone not known to the team should have 2 people attending the 1st visit.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Y/ N / NK | Date |
| Does the adult have a history of violence, or threatening behaviour? *If yes, please detail below* |  |  |
| Is the adult a risk to themselves? |  |  |
| Does the adult have any health problems that may cause unpredictable behaviour, including substance or alcohol mis-use? *If yes, please detail below* |  |  |
| Does the adult have any vulnerabilities that would make it inappropriate for him/ her to be visited alone or by a particular gender? |  |  |
| Is there anyone else living in the house/ a regular visitor who may have any of the issues identified above?  *If yes, please detail below* |  |  |
| Are there any health risks associated with environment (Examples might be infestation, smoking, intravenous drug use, infectious diseases, dangerous pets?) *If yes, please detail below* |  |  |
| Is the home considered to be unsafe due to hoarding, poor sanitation, blocked doorways (for easy exit) or other reason? |  |  |
| Is the home in a particularly isolated or unlit area? |  |  |

The completed form should be submitted with the record of the 1st visit.

Continual vigilance should be observed and any changes to the person’s behaviour or environment noted and discussed in supervision.  **March 2024**

**Appendix 2 Ruscombe and Twyford policy on recording pastoral encounters**

Records on pastoral encounters are kept to safeguard those visiting and those being visited in the case of a subsequent enquiry or allegation.

**Policy**

In following the guidelines and principles set out below, the quality of pastoral care provided by and through the church is of paramount importance.

Pastoral encounters may take the form of face-to-face encounters, written or telephone communication. It is not necessary to record every such encounter. The following is a guide, and some discretion will be needed in the exercise of the policy:

If a safeguarding issue is raised, the matter must be recorded. See separate guidance on *Recording safeguarding issues*. Otherwise:

* a brief conversation at morning worship or in the street is unlikely to warrant a record.
* a home or hospital visit should normally be recorded. Exceptions would be in situations where the visit is made to someone as a friend as distinct from a visit in the name of the church. It will be for the person making the visit to decide on the nature of the visit in such cases;
* telephone calls would not normally be the subject of a record but it may be judged wise in certain situations;
* records may be kept when cards (‘get well’, condolence, congratulations etc.) are sent;
* e-mails will vary considerably in content and discretion will be needed when deciding whether to make a record or not; significant emails may need to be printed out and hard copies retained;
* letters are usually written to ensure that ‘something is in writing’ and so keeping a copy would be appropriate.

It is envisaged that records will fall into five categories:

* Home Communion visits should be recorded in a log in the vestry. This record should, in future, include the names of individuals visited or the location of the visit to a care home, where there are multiple communicants;
* Baptismal, wedding and funeral visits should be recorded;
* From time to time clergy or others in ministry are engaged in pastoral encounters which are not safeguarding issues and which are highly confidential. Clergy are advised to make a brief note with a least the date and the name of the person.
* Pastoral visits made by the Pastoral Care Team on behalf of the church and LEP will be recorded and kept in the parish office.
* The above database should include brief records that would previously have been considered insignificant*.* Visits by members of the Ministry Team and Funeral visits fall into this category.