

Pastoral Care Policy

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Primary Responsibility:	Paul Rogers (Lead Pastor)	Date Effective:	September 2023
Pastoral Care Team Leader:	Michelle Cockburn		
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Authorised by:	BEC Church Leaders	BEC Members	
Date:			
Review Date:	August 2025		

As an affiliate member of Pastoral Care UK (PCUK), Bilton Evangelical Church (BEC) recognises the importance of and need for effective Christian pastoral care to sustain a healthy church environment. Pastoral Care UK is a branch of the Association of Christian Counsellors.

PCUK’s vision for pastoral care is based on John 13: 34-35;

‘A new command I give you: Love one another as I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.’

This dovetails well with BEC’s vision of 'Seeing transformation, in Rugby and beyond, as everyone follows Jesus'.

Pastoral Care is also a missional activity which we are **ALL** called to wherever God places us, as we love and care for one another, which **SOME** are particularly gifted for, as they are called to specific pastoral care roles and responsibilities and which a **FEW** are led to resource through specialist skills, training, knowledge and experience, as they enable the **ALL** and the **SOME**.

This policy is intended to supplement and should be read in conjunction with the ‘Guidelines for Good Practice in Pastoral Care’ developed by Pastoral Care UK ([Appendix 3](#)), and BEC’s Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy.

The Lead Pastor has ultimate responsibility for Pastoral Care and Prayer Ministry at BEC.

Contents:

Policy Statement

Structure

Pastoral Care Process at BEC

Definitions

Confidentiality

Recruitment and Training

Supervision and Support

Prayer

Boundaries, Care for Leaders and Self Care

Referral

Appendices

Policy Statement on Pastoral Care

As members of BEC, we commit ourselves to the nurturing, protection and safekeeping of all.

We believe it is the responsibility of each one of us to care for one another and to seek to help others when they are experiencing hardship or problems that, at least for the moment seem beyond their ability to cope.

We recognise that this caring is the responsibility of the whole church.

BEC is also committed to supporting, resourcing, training and supervising those who work specifically within the area of Pastoral Care.

BEC is committed to following the Association of Christian Counsellors' (ACC) PCUK guidelines for good practice in Pastoral Care.

Each person who is supporting others within the area of Pastoral Care must agree to observe the guidelines and policies named within this document and comply with the PCUK guidelines for good practice in Pastoral Care.

Structure

As well as the membership as a whole, there are several formal groups within BEC that have a particular responsibility for pastoral care. These groups include:

- Life Groups
- The Prayer Ministry Team
- The Pastoral Care Coordination Team (PCCT)

The Pastoral Care Coordination Team may signpost people to external professional agencies e.g. GP's, Counselling etc. where their help is believed to be appropriate.

Life Group and Cluster leaders and/or a nominated person with particular gifting within each group, exercise pastoral care for their group members.

The Prayer Ministry Team leaders are responsible for the coordination of the Prayer Ministry Team, under the overall responsibility of the Lead Pastor.

A copy of the Pastoral Care Structure at BEC is included. ([Appendix 1](#))

Pastoral Care Process at BEC

It is intended that most of pastoral care will take place in Life Groups as we **ALL** care for one another. On occasion, issues may arise that need more particular care and are beyond the skills and experience of the Life Group leader. In these circumstances, the individual's issue would, with their permission be referred by the Life Group leader to the Cluster leader for advice. If it is not possible for the Cluster leader to resolve the issue, the matter may then be referred to the Pastoral Care Coordination team (PCCT).

All members of BEC may request to speak directly to one of the Pastors or refer themselves to the PCCT, in confidence about concerns or difficulties they may be experiencing.

Following an initial meeting with the individual, if the issue remains unresolved, the Pastors would normally refer the matter to the PCCT for their consideration.

It may, on occasion be necessary for one of the Pastors to make the the PCCT aware of issues within the church i.e. where this may have an impact on other BEC members or the smooth running of the church. The decision to do so would be made by one or more of the Church Leaders.

All those providing Pastoral Care should receive regular Supervision.

A copy of a simple flow diagram showing how Pastoral Care issues are dealt with at BEC has been included. (Appendix 2).

Definitions:

Pastoral Care:

Pastoral care may involve giving practical assistance and/or emotional support as part of a process of helping people through difficult times, or helping them deal with difficult situations. It involves building relationships, befriending people and getting involved in their lives, with their permission even if only for a particular period of time.

Pastoral Care Coordination Team:

The Pastoral Care Coordination Team (PCCT) consists of a small group of specifically appointed individuals, who are lead by the Pastoral Care Team Leader. These individuals have been endorsed by the Church Leaders as having particular gifts, skills and experience relevant to pastoral care at BEC.

The PCCT meet on a regular basis, either on Zoom or face to face to consider referrals made by individuals, via the email system 'Care@BEC', by Cluster leaders, or one of the Pastors.

The PCCT and other ministries leaders meet together as the need arises, to consider and make recommendations on strategic issues relating to pastoral care at BEC.

BEC Support Fund:

In response to financial hardship some experience, the Trustees commissioned the PCCT to develop and manage a Support Fund.

All current BEC members, and those who attend any of the BEC ministries on a regular basis would be eligible to benefit from the fund, providing their application is approved by the PCCT. The maximum amount of money that can be granted for each application is £200.

Regular reports are submitted by the PCCT Leader to the BEC Treasurer of applications granted. The Treasurer would also include a summary of the state of the fund in their annual financial report at the BEC members meeting.

Pastoral Supporters:

Individual Pastoral Supporters are sometimes appointed by the PCCT, to provide more specific pastoral support on a one-to-one basis. This help may involve listening, mentoring, discipleship and, when necessary home visits. A relationship will exist, but it would not be particularly defined and there would be no formal definition of the boundaries of the relationship as there would be with

Counselling. The Pastoral Supporters are accountable to the PCCT Leader and provided with supervision as and when necessary.

Although any church member may decide to visit others in their own home, regular visiting will be arranged for those in need, those who are sick or otherwise not in routine contact with the church. This type of visiting is coordinated by the PCCT Leader.

All Pastoral Supporters will be required to hold a satisfactory Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance and have received awareness training for the Safeguarding of Children and Young people and Vulnerable Adults.

PCCT Intercessors:

A small group of Intercessors were appointed by the PCCT, to support the team and those in need by regular intercessory prayer. The Intercessors form part of a WhatsApp group, together with members of the PCCT and the Lead Pastor. Specific urgent and anonymised requests for prayer are passed to the WhatsApp group. The Intercessors recognise and agree to the absolute confidentiality of any requests for prayer.

Prayer Ministry:

Prayer Ministry is seen as seeking God's intervention/healing in someone's life through prayer with them, for expressed issues and situations. It may involve using Bible passages, verses and pictures given by the Holy Spirit, to encourage the person and speak the truth of God's word into their situation.

There is a Prayer Ministry team at BEC, members of which have been appointed by the Prayer Ministry Leaders. The Prayer Ministry Leaders report directly to the Lead Pastor.

Prayer ministry at BEC is usually seen as informal, although members of the team are assigned to each of the Sunday services. It is typically brief with only occasional informal follow-up. There are no detailed records kept and no formal agreement in place.

Members of the Prayer Ministry team would be required to attend appropriate training e.g. The Well Christian Healing Prayer Ministry training.

In all these activities, the cared-for person's autonomy and responsibility for their own actions is to be respected at all times, as is the maturity of their faith and their particular discipleship.

Care must be taken at all times not to invade people's personal space and permission must always be sought before any appropriate physical contact.

Prayer Ministry usually takes place with two prayers and it is considered good practice for males to pray with males and females with females.

Confidentiality:

All information received by those engaged in pastoral care within Life Groups, the Pastoral Care Coordination Team, Pastoral Care supporters, or Prayer Ministry will be held in the strictest of confidence, unless specific permission is given to share this information with others.

The desire to uphold others in prayer must not be used to excuse the obligation of confidentiality.

It is recognised that some workers may need to discuss issues raised with them for the purposes of supervision or seeking advice on how to proceed. These matters will be held within a 'Circle of

confidentiality' and an individual is not to be named or readily identified by the details shared.

Any confidential notes kept will not include an individual's name, to protect their identity.

All members of the Pastoral Care Coordination and Pastoral Supporters will, on appointment agree to and sign an 'Agreement of Confidentiality'. Copies of those agreements will be kept securely in the Administration Office at BEC.

Confidentiality is not the same as secrecy, and is defined as follows:-

Those working in the areas of Pastoral Care, Intercessory prayer or Prayer ministry will treat as confidential all information given by the individual except:

- a) Where the Pastoral Care worker has a legal obligation to disclose information to other authorities.
- b) Where the Pastoral Care worker needs to refer to and receive guidance from their Supervisor, providing that the identity of the individual is not revealed.
- c) Where there is a risk of serious physical harm to self or others.
- d) Where the individual agrees that information should be given to another party or agency.
- e) Where the information shared may have potential to 'damage' the flock or BEC church family. If this is suspected, one of the Pastors or a member of the PCCT must be informed.

The Pastoral Carer may keep brief notes of their meetings with an individual. However, the individual will not be identified from these records, which will be kept securely and will only be available to the Pastoral Carer, unless subpoenaed by a court of law. The individual receiving the pastoral care will be made aware that brief anonymised records will be kept, in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR 2016). Such records will be destroyed after 3 years.

Recruitment and Training:

The Church Leaders at BEC shall exercise reasonable care and diligence in the selection, appointment and supervision of persons undertaking pastoral care work and on behalf of the church.

BEC will **not** seek volunteers in the area of Pastoral Care by general invitation, but will only consider people on an individual basis after prayer and due reflection on their gifting in this area.

As those working in the area of Pastoral Care may well be involved with those who are vulnerable to abuse, it is BEC's policy that those members of the following groups obtain satisfactory clearance from the Disclosure and Barring Service:

- Pastoral Care Coordination Team
- Pastoral Supporters

Members of the Prayer Ministry Team are expected to be praying with individuals in the context of church services and do not usually work alone. Therefore they do not need DBS clearance.

All those who find themselves, from time to time in a position where others come to them for help or encouragement should do what they can to ensure they have reasonable skills to deal competently with the situation.

This may involve seeking appropriate training, especially in the area of sensitive and responsive 'listening' skills.

For those more specifically involved in offering help, such as Life Group, Cluster leaders, Pastoral Supporters will require a minimum level of training in 'Listening' skills or an ACC recognised Counselling or Pastoral Care course.

Supervision and Support:

Support for those specifically involved in Pastoral Care and Prayer Ministry comes via the regular meetings that are held for each of the groups. Additionally, help and support may be sought from members of the PCCT or BEC Church Leaders at any time. It is accepted practice at BEC that those involved in Pastoral Care, or Prayer Ministry will be regularly supported in prayer by their Life Groups.

Those who are Pastoral Supporters will be required to attend regular individual or peer group supervision sessions, chaired by the PCCT Leader or another qualified Counselling Supervisor. Any issues of concern may be raised at these supervision sessions, within the boundaries of confidentiality.

Prayer:

All involved in Pastoral Care are encouraged to pray for the people they are seeking to help, not only privately but also when they meet together for supervision, again within the boundaries of confidentiality.

Prayer with the people they are seeking to help must only be carried out with their permission, and then in a sensitive manner, giving due consideration to their spiritual maturity and discipleship.

BEC recognises that those involved in Pastoral Care act as God's channels; it is only He who ultimately achieves change and healing.

Boundaries, Care for Leaders and Self-Care:

Boundaries exist so that we can confidently experience freedom within them. There are many aspects of a Pastoral Care relationship around which we may draw boundaries. Pastoral workers should not enter any situation which they are not comfortable with. They need to be clear within their own mind what their boundaries are and ensure they still permit a viable relationship with the person they are seeking to help. Any concern in this area should be discussed with a member of the PCCT or a BEC Church Leader.

It is important that all Leaders and members of the PCCT at BEC receive regular care and support. It is intended that Leaders and Trustees receive support through their Life Groups.

Pastoral Carers also need to take care of themselves. This involves ensuring that someone knows what they are involved in, and pray for them. They should make sufficient time for rest and relaxation and time alone with God.

Referral:

An important aspect of Pastoral Care is that workers must not offer help beyond their competence or ability. If the issues presented by an individual are beyond their ability to help, they must refer the individual to a person with those abilities.

The Pastoral Care of children and young people (those 18 years old and younger) should be referred to the appropriate Children's, Youth worker, Children and Families Team Leader or to the BEC Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), who will be familiar with the Safeguarding Children

and Young People and Vulnerable Adults policies and procedures.

In exceptional circumstances and at the discretion of one of the Pastors and/or the PCCT, the church may agree to offer financial support to a BEC member who is referred by the church to an independent counsellor or agency for a specified period of time. The responsibility for the Counseling remains with the Counsellor.

Appendices:

- 1. Structure for Pastoral Care at BEC**
- 2. Pastoral Care Process at BEC**
- 3. Pastoral Care UK's 'Guidelines for Good Practice in Pastoral Care'.**