

The Church of England

House of Bishops' guidelines for good practice in the healing ministry

The healing ministry is Jesus' ministry entrusted to us, always to be exercised with reverence, love and compassion. The guiding principle is to recognize the presence of God in those receiving this ministry and honor his presence in them.

- 1 **Prayer and preparation.** The healing ministry is based on prayer in the name of Jesus Christ; those involved in this ministry should be prayerful, regularly practicing Christians who acknowledge his healing love and are willing to pray and listen for guidance in order to minister appropriately to others.
- 2 **Safety.** All reasonable steps should be taken to ensure the safety of the person receiving this ministry. People have a right to know what is being provided and how they will be ministered to.
- 3 **Accountability and diocesan regulations.** Everyone involved in the healing ministry needs clear lines of accountability to recognize who holds relevant authority within their parish church. All reasonable steps should be taken by those involved to ensure their awareness of current law as it applies to this ministry, e.g. data protection, informed consent. Legal liability issues must be considered from an insurance viewpoint. Existing diocesan regulations should be also followed.
- 4 **Training.** Individuals should receive appropriate training in this ministry and be kept up to date with developments and its ecumenical expression. Healing team leaders must ensure that members have opportunities for training and a common understanding of good practice.
- 5 **Competence and boundaries.** Persons in this ministry should be aware of their personal limitations and ensure that they are properly prepared and fit to be involved. If fitness is doubtful or compromised or there is a conflict of interest, they should withdraw from ministering to others. Professional boundaries with health care professionals and chaplaincies should be observed.
- 6 **Personal conduct.** The healing ministry is part of the message of the gospel; the personal conduct of everyone involved should encourage confidence in this ministry and not undermine it. Language, personal hygiene, general appearance, body language and touch used by those ministering should be appropriate, considerate and courteous towards those receiving it. No-one should be ministered to against their will.
- 7 **Confidentiality and public statements.** People's privacy and dignity should be respected and protected. Any limitations to confidentiality should be explained in advance and any disclosure should be restricted to relevant information. It should be conveyed only to appropriate people, normally with the parishioner's consent, and not misused in any way.
- 8 **Counseling and psychotherapy.** These specific treatments, as distinct from pastoral care and listening, should only be provided by accredited counselors and therapists who adhere to the codes of ethics and practice of their regulatory organizations and who have professional insurance cover.
- 9 **Deliverance.** The House of Bishops' guidelines (1975) should be followed and diocesan advisors consulted when necessary.
- 10 **Partnership.** The healing ministry should be carried out in co-operation, where appropriate, with chaplains and representatives of our ecumenical partners, and those involved in professional and voluntary healthcare, whilst recognizing that they may be bound by other codes of conduct.