



Sidcup Baptist Church

Pastoral Care Policy

Version 2.4 2026/04/11

1. What Is pastoral care and why do we need it?

1.1 The best pastoral care model we have is that of Jesus the Good Shepherd, and any implementation of pastoral care should be with reference to Him. We need to be clear about the purpose of pastoral care: the prime concern is for the spiritual welfare of the flock. Other needs – relating to physical health and other aspects – are important but secondary to spiritual welfare.

1.2 Pastoral care encompasses all ages and can encounter a wide range of human conditions, including physical health issues, bereavement, financial difficulties, job/unemployment stresses, mental health difficulties, and fears. It is important to recognise the limits of pastoral care and when counselling and specialist expertise may need to be engaged.

1.3 We will endeavour to take a holistic approach to pastoral care, recognising that care starts with welcoming people at initial contact, then moves into forming and maintaining good relationships, and involves caring for people if and when they should leave SBC for whatever reason, seeking to send them on their way walking in faith with Jesus.

1.4 Confidentiality and safeguarding are key principles that need to be adhered to. The *Safeguarding Policies and Procedures Manual for Sidcup Baptist Church* (especially section 5.4.3, 'Pastoral care of adults in their own homes') applies to pastoral care in general.

1.5 The aim of this policy is to maintain a high and consistent standard in the conduct of pastoral care, not to institutionalise it, recognising that the local church is a community of individuals making up part of the Body of Christ in a real sense.

2. Who receives pastoral care?

2.1 The prime scope and focus for pastoral care will be those identified on SBC's ChurchSuite database, tagged as being on the 'congregation list' (includes members and non-members). On an exceptional basis, other individuals may also be recipients of pastoral care.

2.2 Pastoral care for the youth (under-18s) will normally be covered by the youth and children's leadership and the Pastor and will be consistent with this policy.

2.3 We recognise that not everyone tagged as being on the 'congregation list' will want to be subject to pastoral care for whatever reason and therefore can opt out. These can be tagged as such on the ChurchSuite database.

3. Who is responsible for pastoral care?

3.1 The Pastor has overall responsibility and accountability for:

3.1.1 maintaining this policy.

3.1.2 providing oversight of pastoral care activity and training.

3.1.3 reporting to the Trustees as required.

3.2 The Pastor will co-ordinate pastoral care activity with any appointed Pastoral Deacon(s) as a Pastoral Leadership Team (PLT).

3.3 The Trustees will ensure that adequate internal and external arrangements are in place for the care of the Pastor and family as appropriate.

3.4 The Pastor will oversee the pastoral care of the Pastoral Deacon(s).

3.5 Pastoral Deacon(s) will assist the Pastor in:

3.5.1 overseeing pastoral care.

3.5.2 arranging and leading Pastoral Care Team (PCT) meetings

3.5.3 providing pastoral care to Pastoral Carers

3.5.4 keeping appropriate records of pastoral visits.

3.5.5 consulting with the Safeguarding Officer on safeguarding matters (including concerns, training, and DBS checks)

3.5.6 visiting those who need support and/or encouragement.

3.5.7 building and maintaining a directory of outside experts/agencies able to provide guidance/referral when an occasion arises.

3.5.8 acting as a triage team to provide urgent and targeted support to those suffering bereavement, in hospital or facing other distressing situations.

3.6 Pastoral Carers (both those in house groups and those outside house groups) will:

3.6.1 visit and support those under their care

3.6.2 report back on their pastoral activity.

3.6.3 meet with the PLT to discuss care and any resulting concerns.

3.6.4 be willing to attend training events that are arranged, when possible.

3.7 It is recognised that in pastoral care there is an inherent risk in a carer beginning to 'own' an individual's problem and not sharing it in confidence with a colleague. We will endeavour to guard against this risk and to look at 'load balancing' to ensure that pastoral care effort is shared and does not overwhelm any one person. We need to be aware of our own limitations and we encourage individuals to seek professional support as they feel necessary.

4. How is pastoral care organised and delivered?

4.1 Pastoral Leadership Team meetings The Pastor and Pastoral Deacon(s) will normally meet every three weeks to review pastoral care activity and prepare reports for the Trustees and Church Members' Meetings as required.

4.3 Pastoral Care Team meetings These will be led by the Pastor and/or Pastoral Deacon(s) and include all Pastoral Carers. They will normally occur every six weeks to review pastoral care issues and include prayer, updates on any pastoral concerns, and relevant training on aspects of pastoral care.

4.4 Pastoral visits These comprise the main vehicle for regular pastoral care engagement. Guidance on how to undertake them and on the protocols to be used (covering such things as confidentiality, safeguarding and record-keeping) will be found in SBC's *Pastoral Care Guide*.

4.5 Training Pastoral care training will feature regularly and all those involved in care will be encouraged to take part. Training delivery can be via the Pastoral Care Team meeting, courses and reading material.

4.6 All those engaged in pastoral care will need to be checked as to whether they need a DBS certificate, according to the Government's DBS guidelines.

NB. A enhanced DBS check for work with adults is a very tight criteria, but it is possible to have a basic check. Advice as to the latest guidelines should be sought from the Safeguarding Officer.

5. What records are kept?

5.1 This Pastoral Care Policy will be subject to SBC's current Data Protection Policy.

5.2 The 'Welcome Card' will be the prime means of gathering the necessary data for pastoral care, and everyone regularly attending SBC will be asked to complete one. This data will then provide input to the ChurchSuite database and individuals can be flagged as being on the 'congregation list'.

5.3 An electronic Pastoral Care Log will be maintained to keep a record of pastoral visits for all those flagged as being on the 'congregation list'. This will be password protected.

5.6 **IMPORTANT** If personal information has been released in error, this must be reported to SBC’s Data Protection Officer. Furthermore, if the information relates to a safeguarding issue, SBC’s Safeguarding Officer should also be informed. Notification can in either case be by word of mouth, in writing or by using the appropriate email addresses (dataprotection@sidcupbaptistchurch.org.uk and protection@sidcupbaptistchurch.org.uk).

6. How will we know that pastoral care is effective?

6.1 The effectiveness of pastoral care will be monitored and reviewed by:

6.1.1 a standing agenda item for pastoral reporting and discussion at Trustee meetings

6.1.2 discussion and review as a core topic at PLT and PCT meetings

6.1.3 feedback from OWLS and seniors, house groups, and youth, who will function as a sounding board.

6.1.4 Church Members’ Meetings.

6.2 Should any complaint be made against a member of the Pastoral Care Team, this will be received, acknowledged, and addressed by the Pastoral Leadership Team in accordance with the ‘*SBC Complaints Policy*’.

Document Change Control

Version	Updates	Date	Editor
2.1	Various in discussion with Paul Davies and Laraine Joy	22/07/25	Leigh Smith
2.2	Sections 2.1, 2.3, 5.2 and 5.3 - Clarification of the meaning of the ‘congregation list’, being a flag on the ChurchSuite database. Version agreed by Paul Davies and Laraine Joy	10/10/25	Leigh Smith
2.3	Sections 3.7, 4.6, 5.3, 6.7 minor changes as suggested by Teresa Willmot	28/11/25	Leigh Smith
2.4	Logo updated	11/04/26	Penny Longman