

Spiritual Companions Trust



GUIDELINES, AGREEMENTS AND CODE OF CONDUCT FOR SPIRITUAL COMPANIONS AND REGISTRANTS ON THE UK REGISTER OF SPIRITUAL CAREGIVERS

2022-2023

Revised December 2022

Foreword

Dear Friends

This Code of Conduct is for graduates of the Diploma in Practical Spirituality and Wellness and for registrants on the UK Register of Spiritual Caregivers. Some work publicly and formally. Others work discretely and informally.

We have a responsibility to our service users and our co-workers. They need to know how we fulfil this responsibility and what to expect from us. This is clearly articulated in this Code of Conduct, which is updated every two years unless there are major changes in working practices.

At the very heart of our work is a personal spiritual practice of connecting with the wonder and energy of life by whatever name we call it. Fuelled by this connection we then give quiet and compassionate care. At all times we are also carefully self-reflective.

In this heart-centred context, a detailed Code of Conduct is absolutely necessary for our work and service in the contemporary world. We companion those who may be vulnerable. We also represent an approach to spirituality and health sometimes named as 'spiritual but not religious.'

The Spiritual Companions Trust has therefore developed robust policies, which are published here and on the Spiritual Companions Trust website. We are dedicated to continuous improvement and welcome feedback.

We need to demonstrate and embody rigour and good governance. So this whole document is necessarily belts and braces. While guiding us, this Code is also reassuring to our partners.

Dr William Bloom

January 2022

Director

Spiritual Companions Trust

spiritualcompanions.org

UK Charity No 1155777

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1.

WHO WE ARE

- a. The Spiritual Companions Trust is an educational charity working in the field of spirituality, wellness, personal development and pastoral care.
- b. We administer the UK Register of Spiritual Caregivers.
- c. We developed, manage and deliver the training of Spiritual Companions.
- d. Our approach is holistic and person-centred. We seek to encourage and empower individuals in their own authentic and personal spiritual approach, and we work always with a light touch — as symbolised by our logo which is that of a feather sitting on water.
- e. The culture and community with whom we work is often labelled as ‘spiritual but not religious.’
- f. We are not aligned with any particular faith community and we welcome people of all faiths and none.
- g. We never claim to be able to represent or lead the worship of any faith tradition unless we ourselves belong to or are ordained in that tradition.
- h. We assert that spirituality is a fundamental and crucial element in the healthy development, fulfilment and wellness of individuals and communities.
- i. The core qualification of the Spiritual Companions Trust is the Diploma in Practical Spirituality and Wellness (Crossfields Institute Ofqual L3) and its predecessor the Certificate in Professional Practice in Spiritual Studies and Companionship (College of Teacher, University of London).
- j. Registrants on the UK Register of Spiritual Caregivers are all qualified in their particular disciplines; and then undergo a further assessment and, if necessary, CPD training before being registered.

Spirituality — Our Definition

Our approach is holistic, person-centred and celebrates diversity. We therefore encourage everyone to develop their own understanding and definition of spirituality. We acknowledge and welcome the many different and diverse understandings and definitions of spirituality. Nevertheless, in particular for this Code of Conduct, it is necessary to define our terms of reference and therefore we offer this understanding of spirituality which we find to work appropriately in the education, healthcare and social care sectors.

Spirituality is everyone’s natural connection with the wonder and energy of life — and the instinct to explore that experience and its meaning.

Spirituality affirms that personal development is about the growth of compassion and consciousness, heart and mind — not material success and status, but love in action.

2.

SPIRITUAL COMPANIONS AGREEMENT AND GUIDELINES

The public offer and service of Spiritual Companions and Registrants on the UK Register of Spiritual Caregivers is summed up in the Spiritual Companions Agreement, which also forms the basis of the Spiritual Companions Trust's insurance scheme.

It is important that our offer is clearly defined and not exaggerated. We are in the first-place companions. We are not counsellors, therapists, coaches or spiritual directors. We work through listening and co-presence and only when appropriate may we remind our companions that life is a spiritual journey and that there are useful tools that can be used to support this journey. For our own clarity and to set the parameters required by insurance, we have formulated The Spiritual Companions Agreement.

This agreement is further underpinned by the Spiritual Companions Guidelines and Code of Conduct.

2.1 SPIRITUAL COMPANIONS AGREEMENT

When Spiritual Companions and Caregivers enter into a companioning relationship, the essence of this relationship is expressed in this agreement or contract with their client.

Listening

With compassion, discretion and respect I will reassure and support you through careful listening, seeking fully to understand your personal story and circumstances.

Your Spiritual Journey

We may talk about your spiritual development, exploring that you are on a life-long journey developing heart and mind, compassion and consciousness.

Spiritual Connection

We may explore together the ways in which you can best develop and deepen your connection with the wonder and energy of life.

Silence and Meditation

We may take some quiet time together; meditation can be healing, reassuring and supportive.

2.2 SPIRITUAL COMPANIONS GUIDELINES

The behaviour and daily practice of all Spiritual Companions and Spiritual Caregivers is guided by the Spiritual Companions Guidelines. These Guidelines were drawn up after a consultative process involving two hundred people from many and no faiths.

SPIRITUAL COMPANIONS GUIDELINES

As best we can, on a daily and ongoing basis we

Connection

- Regularly connect with and experience the wonder and energy of existence

Core Skills

- Are grounded, calm and centred in our bodies
- Can pause, be still at will and become mindfully present
- Are aware of the subtle sensations of spiritual connection
- Witness with compassion, in silence when appropriate

Reflection

- Self-reflect and manage our behaviour, health and development with compassion, love and wisdom
- Are emotionally literate and transparent about our own processes
- Are in ongoing relationships and groups of peer support, actively seeking and welcoming feedback from others
- Understand that there are psychological challenges that occur as the everyday self emerges into spiritual consciousness
- Can take responsibility, apologise, forgive and receive forgiveness
- Appreciate that all life is in a continual process of emergence and are comfortable with unknowing
- Possess an appropriate sense of humour

Service

- Enable safe and sacred space
- Provide a non-intrusive, welcoming, healing and holding presence
- Listen with care and enable people to clarify and own their own psycho-spiritual development
- Can assert clear boundaries and intervene, when appropriate, to stop abuse
- Celebrate diversity and welcome the fact that there are many different paths of spiritual development
- Are engaged citizens, actively dedicated to social justice, ecological health and honouring the spirit in all beings
- Are aware of local resources
- Know our personal and professional limitations and are able to refer appropriately

2.3 SPIRITUAL COMPANIONS PROFESSIONAL GUIDELINES

When working formally in a professional or voluntary situation we realise that our guidelines need extra rigour and care. We have therefore supplemented the guidelines with professional guidelines.

When giving companionship and spiritual care we:

- Can stay calm and centred, and consistently and patiently hold a difficult situation with an open heart and generous disposition.
- Compassionately understand and empathise with people's resistance and defensiveness when they are faced with change and discomfort.
- Appreciate and accept that when in the role of facilitator or mentor that we may become the target of people's projections.
- Gracefully accept all irritations, criticisms and hurts as useful stimulations to our personal spiritual growth.
- Know when it is appropriate to pray for grace, support and guidance, and be open to receiving and acknowledging it.
- Stay present to people and not abandon them if and when the relationship and communications become tense and difficult.
- Can enquire appropriately enabling people to feel safe, reassured and able to disclose.

3. PUBLIC CODE OF CONDUCT

3.1 Personal Practice

- a. Our Code of Conduct describes and guides both our personal and professional lives. The same values, ethics and generosity of spirit apply to all aspects of our lives as we believe in congruence and no separation between our private and public lives, attitudes and behaviour.
- b. At the very core of our code is our aspiration to be a benevolent, reassuring and supportive presence wherever we are and with whomever we accompany.
- c. The personal foundation of our code rests in our daily spiritual practice as described in the Spiritual Companions Guidelines. At their core is a personal daily spiritual practice in which, in our own individual and authentic way, we take time to:
 - Connect with and experience the wonder and energy of all life.
 - Reflect and mindfully self-manage the development of our hearts and minds — compassion and consciousness.
 - Contemplate our highest values and how they are demonstrated in a life of service.
- d. In the support that we give each other and to others, we enable and encourage this daily and on-going practice in all its many diverse and inspiring ways.
- e. In all of our trainings, CPD and progression, we value professionalism and evidence-based best practice. At the same time in a spirit of humility before the sheer wonder of life, we assert that the comfort and quality of the support we give is directly proportional to the increasing depth of our own spiritual connection, reflective practice and willingness to be of compassionate and mindful service.
- f. At our best we enable people to appreciate that, whatever their circumstances, they are on a life-long journey of spiritual and personal development, and when appropriate we enable them to gain the skills and understandings better to manage this process.
- g. We value and are grateful to our clients and students for the opportunities they give us to learn and serve. We are teaching and enabling that which we ourselves must learn and develop.

3.2 Formal and Informal Care

In terms of quality of attention, presence and relationship, Spiritual Companions and Caregivers value both informal and formal relationships. Every human encounter has equal importance and meaning.

Informal — An informal encounter may happen serendipitously — for example in a queue or casually at a party — and in that encounter the supportive and enabling presence is implicit and not explicit.

Formal/Voluntary/Professional — A formal encounter occurs when the nature of the conversation and the meeting is explicitly understood to be about giving care and/or exploring spirituality.

Whether the meeting is informal or formal, the Spiritual Companion adheres to the Guidelines and Code of Conduct.

In this context anyone calling themselves a 'Spiritual Companion' or 'Spiritual Caregiver' on the Register has fulfilled our assessment requirements. They all abide by our code of professional practice when dealing with the public.

3.3 With Service Users

- a. When we companion or work with you we will inform you that we are registrants on the UK Register of Spiritual Caregivers
- b. We are appropriately insured to enable us to work with the public.
- c. We abide by the UKRSC's Equal Opportunities and Safeguarding policies.
- d. We are aware of our own limits and refer when necessary.
- e. We maintain absolute confidentiality unless a situation arises where a safeguarding concern must be reported.
- f. If our companionship is formal or professional, we will be clear and explicit about how we will work together, including the duration of our working relationship, and any costs that might be incurred for our services.
- g. We may offer guidance while always being aware and supportive that you will make your own choices.
- h. We maintain the boundaries of a professional working relationship.

We will not

- a. Direct you to move forwards in any particular way.
- b. Mix ways of working with you — for example counselling or any other services will be offered separately.
- c. Act in any way that brings the Spiritual Companions Trust and UKRSC into disrepute.

3.4 Equality and Power

- a. Spiritual Companions and Caregivers respect the rights, dignity and worth of every human being and their ultimate right to self-determination. Specifically, we treat everyone equitably and sensitively, within the context of their activity and ability, regardless of gender, ethnic origin, cultural background, intellectual and physical capabilities, sexual orientation, religion or political affiliation. (See our Equal Opportunities policy.)
- b. Spiritual Companions and Caregivers recognise that every encounter is a meeting between souls of equal value and that we possess no particular status or special position by virtue of our training and role.
- c. Spiritual Companions and Caregivers are aware of the social and psychological dynamics that can play out in advisory, teaching and therapeutic relationships, in particular the tendency for the client to give away power and the Companion/Carer to take it. We are dedicated to an ongoing and high awareness of these power dynamics, to never take advantage of them and to be in a process of ongoing reflection and self-management concerning them.
- d. Spiritual Companions and Caregivers affirm that every encounter is an opportunity for both the service user and for us to improve, develop and learn, thereby facilitating an equal and democratic relationship.

- e. Spiritual Companions and Caregivers enable their service users to develop mature and adult autonomy, respecting their ability to make decisions and changes in the light of their own beliefs, values and experience.
- f. Spiritual Companions and Caregivers are responsible for setting and monitoring the boundaries between a working relationship and friendship and for making the boundaries as explicit as possible to the client.
- g. Spiritual Companions and Caregivers will never take emotional advantage of their clients, flirt with them or engage in any form of sexual intimacy.
- h. Spiritual Companions and Caregivers should inform themselves of the social, moral and legal expectations of the community in which they work and respect those cultural aspects of their service users, students and colleagues.

3.5 Confidentiality and Data Protection

- a. We honour the sacred trust between a Spiritual Caregiver and a service user, and promise to hold any personal information in the strictest confidence within the law. The same confidentiality applies to our group meetings.
- b. Spiritual Companions and Caregivers may discuss their service users in confidence with their supervisor and this will be made explicit in the consent agreement for formal/professional companionship sessions.
- c. Any Spiritual Companion and Caregiver may need to break an agreement of confidentiality and will follow our safeguarding policy where the Companion or Carer believes a service user or someone the service user knows may come to harm. The service user will always be informed should confidentiality have to be broken for these reasons.
- d. When recording or holding personal information we adhere strictly to the laws and good practice of data protection as laid out in the UK-GDPR (31 January 2020.)

3.6 Professional Relationship and Responsibility

- a. Spiritual Companions and Caregivers must not misrepresent themselves in terms of their professional qualifications, experience, and capabilities when entering an informal or formal relationship.
- b. Spiritual Companions and Caregivers are especially clear that their remit is to give reassurance and to support people in their spiritual development, and not to present themselves as engaging in a psychotherapeutic or coaching relationship — although there is a clear appreciation that a more harmonious and consistent spiritual practice may have a profound influence on an individual's personal and professional life. If a Companion or Caregiver ever offers guidance this will be made explicit.
- c. Where a Spiritual Companion's or Caregiver's background includes a therapeutic or specialist training this of course can be integrated into companionship, but this needs to be explicit and clearly communicated to the client as part of their relationship.

3.7 Recommending Action and Referral

- a. Spiritual Companions and Caregivers who have a professional qualification in a coaching, counselling or therapeutic approach will exercise care and self-reflection before recommending themselves as a referral for that approach or before integrating that approach into their sessions; and will never self-refer for financial gain.
- b. If during a companionship conversation, implicit or explicit, a Spiritual Companion or Caregiver recommends that the person seek help from another, more appropriate professional (e.g. GP, therapist, social care worker, police, Citizens Advice Bureau,) the Companion/Caregiver must inform either the SC network administrator by email or phone of this referral. This is so that we have a note of your referral on file and will be able to formally support you should there be an incident or complaint at any point in the future.

3.8 Professional Competence

- a. Spiritual Companions and Caregivers who are in doubt about their ability to perform competently must seek appropriate supervision, support and advice.
- b. Spiritual Companions and Caregivers are expected to be able to account to service users and colleagues for what they do and why.
- c. Spiritual Companions and Caregivers will ascertain, whenever necessary, that service users have sought medical or other professional advice, and advise where appropriate that they do so.
- d. Spiritual Companions and Caregivers have a professional and ethical obligation to be aware of whether their service users are in relationship with other caring, pastoral or therapeutic agencies and work in harmony with those bodies.
- e. Spiritual Companions and Caregivers should not offer services that duplicate services offered by other professionals as this may often cause hindrance to service users.
- f. Spiritual Companions and Caregivers have a responsibility to monitor the limits of their competence. Where those limits are reached, they must refer on to others more able to help. Where Companions have become, through whatever means, unable to work effectively, they must withdraw from work until such time as they are able to work effectively again. These decisions are taken by the Spiritual Companion in consultation with colleagues and supervisors.
- g. Spiritual Companions and Caregivers should continuously be working to extend the range of their own skills and to become clearer all the time concerning their own limitations.
- h. We offer all Spiritual Companions and Caregivers access to ongoing personal and spiritual development through our CPD, support and supervision policy and our training pathway.

3.9 Drugs and Alcohol

Practising under the influence of alcohol or mind-altering drugs is unethical. Spiritual Companions and Caregivers who are undergoing treatment for chemical dependency disorders or who are taking medication which may affect their ability to work should disclose this information to the SC Network Administrator and should withdraw from practising until such time as those professionals with whom they are being treated deem it appropriate.

3.10 Gossip & Innuendo

Spiritual Companions and Caregivers are part of a community of peers and colleagues where gossip, innuendo, and derogatory comments about other members of the community, or practitioners of another branch of therapy or spiritual approach, are inappropriate and to be avoided. Spiritual Companions and Caregivers will be guided by the dictum: 'If you have something to say to someone, say it to their face and not behind their back'

4. INSURANCE

- a. Spiritual Companions and Caregivers must take out insurance cover through our affinity scheme or equivalent cover; or ensure that they are explicitly covered by the insurance of the body or organisation in which they are working or volunteering.
- b. If you already have professional insurance cover, we require that you have Spiritual Companion/Caregiver added to your policy for your usual activities by your usual insurer.

5. ADVERTISING

Spiritual Companions and Caregivers may engage in appropriate informational activities that educate the public about their professional qualifications and individual scopes of practice.

5.1 Once you are an accredited Spiritual Companion or Caregiver:

- a. You can publicly use the term 'Spiritual Caregiver' and the UKRSC logo in your marketing materials.
- b. You cannot publicly announce that you are a Spiritual Companion or Caregiver in any way that falsely suggests that you are psychotherapeutically competent unless you have the appropriate parallel training.
- c. You represent your competencies, education, training and experience relevant to your practice of spiritual care in an accurate manner.
- d. You do not use any professional identification (business cards, letterhead, Internet or telephone directory, etc.) that is false, misleading, fraudulent or deceptive.
- e. You list and claim as evidence only degrees and certifications that are earned from educational institutions and/or training programs that are recognised within the framework of UK or European qualifications.

6. REGISTRATION AND PUBLIC COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

6.1 Registration

- a. Our administrative office holds the Register and we reserve the right to remove a registrant's name from the Register if we deem that our Code of Conduct has been infringed.
- b. Registrants affirm the importance of their adherence to our Code of Conduct and our Guidelines.
- c. Registrants affirm that if their actions are not in accordance with our Code of Conduct and our Guidelines they are willing to discuss issues and challenges with the Executive Team and Board of Trustees.
- d. If there is any unresolved disagreement, then an aggrieved registrant may follow the process outlined in the Public Complaints Procedure. (see below)

6.2 Public Complaints Procedure

We are committed to providing a high-quality, compassionate and caring service to all who come into relationship with us. When something goes wrong, we need you to tell us about it. This will help us to improve our standards.

If you have a complaint, please write to us by email at info@spiritualcompanions.org

or by post to

Director, Spiritual Companions, PO Box 3662, Glastonbury BA6 8ZY

Please give us as much detail concerning your complaint as you can.

What will happen next?

- a. Having received your complaint, we will send you a letter or email acknowledging receipt of your complaint within seven days of receiving it.
- b. We will then investigate your complaint. This will normally involve passing your complaint to one of our senior educators or a trustee, who will review your complaint and speak to the relevant registrant.
- c. Within four weeks of sending you the acknowledgement letter, we will then invite you to a meeting in person or on the phone to discuss and hopefully resolve your complaint.
- d. Within seven days of that meeting, we will write to you to confirm what took place and any solutions or next steps that we agreed with you.
- e. If you do not want a meeting or it is not possible, we will send you a detailed written reply to your complaint, including suggestions made by the independent reviewer for

resolving the matter, within four weeks of your informing us that a meeting is not possible.

- f. At this stage, if you are still not satisfied, you should contact us again and we will arrange for another senior member, also unconnected with the matter to review the situation.
- g. We will then write to you within four weeks of receiving your request for a review, confirming our final position on your complaint and explaining our reasons.
- h. If you are still not satisfied, you may wish to consider the appropriate legal action.

7. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND DIVERSITY POLICY

- a. Spiritual Companions and Caregivers support the public and each other in their personal, professional and spiritual development. We are absolutely committed to an equal opportunities policy that recognises the unique soul in all beings.
- b. Our Equal Opportunities and Diversity policy commits us to ensuring that there is no discrimination in the recruitment, retention, training and development of staff, students, companions and caregivers on the basis of age, disability, gender including transgender, HIV/AIDS status, marital status including civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, political opinion, race/ethnicity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, spent convictions, trade union activity or membership, work pattern and on the basis of having or not having dependants or any other irrelevant grounds. However as an educational charity we always reserve the right to discern whether our employees, partners, volunteers and students are congruent with our inclusive, multicultural and multifaith approach that seeks to enable autonomous adults.
- c. We aim to abide by and promote equality legislation by following both the letter and the spirit of the law to try to avoid unjustified discrimination recognising such discrimination as a barrier to equality of opportunity, inclusion and human rights.
- d. Spiritual Companions and Caregivers are committed to:
 - Understanding, valuing and working with diversity to enable fair and full participation in our work
 - Ensuring that there is no discrimination in our recruitment, selection and other processes
 - Ensuring action that promotes equality of opportunity
 - Treating all individuals with whom we work fairly and with dignity and respect
 - Playing our part in removing barriers and redressing imbalances caused by inequality and discrimination.
- e. All staff, volunteers, Spiritual Companions and Caregivers are required to ensure their behaviour is consistent with this Equal Opportunities and Diversity policy. We also require that all our students and working partners are aware of this policy and operate consistently with it.

8. SAFEGUARDING OVERVIEW

The Spiritual Companions Trust has a full and detailed Safeguarding Guidelines document, see: 'Safeguarding Guidelines 2021.' This policy asserts:

- a. Spiritual Companions and Caregivers are aware that children are people under the age of 18 (Keeping children safe in education 2015) and that the Protection of Freedoms Act defines vulnerable adults as someone receiving relevant health, social or personal care, or someone who needs relevant assistance in conducting their own affairs.
- b. A Spiritual Companion and Caregiver does not work with a child under 18 unless there is full parental or guardian consent.
- c. Spiritual Companions and Caregivers are aware that adults have a right to take responsibility for their own choices unless they have been assessed by a mental health professional as not having mental health capacity.
- d. Where an adult does not have capacity to make their own decisions Spiritual Companions and Caregivers refer to the relevant professional working with the individual before engaging in a caring relationship.
- e. Where a Spiritual Companion and Caregiver feels that a child is at risk the Companion has a duty to make a referral to the appropriate authority. Usually this will be social care or the police. This includes risks to the children of adult clients seeking Companionship or care. Where the Companion is unsure they can seek guidance from a supervisor via the SC administrator.
- f. Where a Spiritual Companion or Caregiver is aware that a service user may have intentions to be involved in an act of violence to others or themselves, such as in an intention to commit suicide, they will make an immediate report using the 101 (non-emergency) or 999 (emergency) telephone numbers.

9. CPD, SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION POLICY

9.1 The Context of CPD, Support and Supervision

- a. Spiritual Companions and Caregivers have diverse personal and professional backgrounds. Most have significant life experience. Many have also gained significant professional qualifications, undertaken extensive personal development and experienced different forms of employment often across two or more careers.
- b. This policy therefore takes into account that most Spiritual Companions and Caregivers already have a mature attitude to ongoing development and support and have a foundation of personal and professional expertise.
- c. At the same time we assert that any real improvement in the effectiveness of our offer derives from our own commitment to spiritual practice, personal and professional development.
- d. Spiritual Companions and Caregivers openly recognise that when working with others we can make mistakes, meet new and unfamiliar challenges and enter difficult situations which are all opportunities for our own growth and improvement.
- e. In this context the Spiritual Companions Trust is fully committed to the highest standards of ongoing support, development and improvement.

9.2 Ongoing Support and Development

- a. SC Registrants must be actively working in alignment with the SC Guidelines and be in ongoing support groups and relationships for feedback and development.
- b. SC Registrants must follow the CPD regulations of the governing body which accredited them. When this is not possible SC Registrants are also given access to ongoing development through workshops and courses offered by the Spiritual Companions Trust.
- c. SC Registrants are recommended to have regular supervisory sessions where they receive deeper levels of feedback and ongoing support, including heartfelt reflective enquiry.
- d. SC Registrants should also participate in and record an annual minimum of 12 hours ongoing personal, professional or spiritual development. This development could include workshops, conferences, retreats, pilgrimages, reading, active discussion and any other relevant activities. Proof of attendance to be sent to the SC administrator with their annual subscription.

10. MENTAL HEALTH REFERRAL PATHWAY



Mental Health Referral Pathway V1.4 – January 2021

