

Life Support Policy

This policy was agreed by the elders of New Life Baptist Church Northallerton on 11/12/2017 and will be reviewed every three years (review date Dec 2020)

Version 1 adopted: 11/12/2017

Aim: The purpose of this Life Support Policy is to inform and support the development of best Life Support practice at New Life Baptist Church Northallerton (NLBC).

What is Life Support?

Life Support is the term that we apply to a ministry of compassion, encouragement and support within the Christian life. It is a broad-based support approach, which goes beyond what some may refer to as “pastoral care”. Recognising that people are made up of body, mind and soul, NLBC seeks to provide support for people in 3 key areas:

PRACTICAL - eg cooking, cleaning, washing, ironing, shopping, gardening, odd jobs, DIY, transport, carer respite, form filling / help with paperwork, local area knowledge

EMOTIONAL – eg support to attend appointments, representing / speaking up for people, listening / writing letters, visiting the unwell, counselling (Marriage, grief, financial, family, health issues, general), mental health support

SPIRITUAL - eg confidential prayer (one to one or distance), support for those unable to attend Church (eg bible reading, access to sermons, music, communion)

Why give Life Support?

We believe that Life Support is a command from Jesus:

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” John 13: 34-35.

Taking our lead from Jesus, our Life Support is based on the following values:

- God's love and compassion for all people
- The unique worth of all human beings made in God's image

- The sensitive application of God's Word to people's lives
- An unconditional love for all people regardless of their lifestyle, values and personality

How do we provide Life Support?

It is the intention of NLBC that most Life Support is provided within the Life Groups, right at the heart of day to day church life. It is entirely natural that, within a Life Group setting of people who meet regularly, encourage each other in their Christian faith and trust each other, Life Support needs can be identified and often met.

We recognise, though, that a Life Group may not have people in it with the necessary skills, experience or time to address some of the Life Support needs the members of that Life Group may have.

It is not desirable or helpful to anyone involved, that members of a Life Group should feel burdened by an expectation that they “should” provide Life Support, which they feel they are not qualified to give or are uncomfortable with giving. Similarly, there may be individuals within a Life Group who may be uncomfortable in receiving Life Support from members of their Life Group.

For that extra Life Support, there are partners of NLBC who are willing to help.

Who gives the extra Life Support?

Through completion of a questionnaire and a follow up discussion with the Life Support Co-ordinator (referred to as “LSC” in this policy), partners of NLBC offer to give Life Support to others using their skills and talents on a regular or ad hoc basis.

The LSC holds a database (stored securely, in accordance with data protection principles) of these individuals so that they can be put in contact with people with specific needs as required

How can the extra Life Support be accessed?

Life Group leaders: with permission of the individual concerned, can contact the LSC to ask for extra Life Support for a member of their Life Group, where this cannot be met within the Life Group for whatever reason.

Pastors/elders: may be aware that a person has specific needs and contact the LSC.

Prayer Ministry team: Life Support leaflets will be available for people who go for prayer or, with permission of the individual concerned, the team member can contact the LSC to ask for extra Life Support for someone who has been to them for prayer.

Other team leaders/church partners: may be aware that a person has specific needs and can contact one of the pastors or LSC to ask for Life Support.

Individuals: can contact their Life Group leader, one of the pastors or LSC to ask for Life Support.

What about people who are not in a Life Group?

Partners of NLBC: will be encouraged to join a Life Group. If they do not wish to join a Life Group, they will still be encouraged to participate in Life Support at NLBC both by offering support (informally and through completion of a LSQ) and receiving it. They can also access extra Life Support through one of the other means above.

Newcomers: will be encouraged to join a Life Group, and will be given information on how to access Life Support at NLBC.

Who is the Life Support Co-ordinator (LSC) and what do they do?

The LSC is a partner of NLBC appointed by the pastors and elders to oversee Life Support. See Appendix 1 for the LSC's job description and person specification.

How are those giving and receiving Life Support protected?

The LSC must provide the Senior Pastor and the Safe to Grow Co-ordinator with the name of every person who has offered to give Life Support before the LSC can agree to that person giving Life Support. If, based on their knowledge or the outcome of an already performed DBS check, either the Senior Pastor or the Safe to Grow Co-ordinator reasonably consider that that person should not undertake any one or more elements of the Life Support that person has offered to give, they will inform the LSC of this. The LSC and Senior Pastor or Safe to Grow Co-ordinator (as appropriate) will then meet the person on a confidential basis to discuss their offer and why it is not being accepted.

The LSC keeps a record of who has received Life Support, when, and from whom (stored securely, in accordance with data protection principles). Unless the person requesting Life Support does not wish this record to be shared with a particular person, this record will only be shared between the LSC, the Pastors and that person's Life Group leader. Details of what has been said during a visit are not disclosed unless one of the exceptions to confidentiality outlined in the "Confidentiality" section below apply or the supported person has given their consent.

Records of discussions will not generally be kept. If they are kept, the person receiving Life Support will be informed and they will be brief, factual and available to the person involved if requested.

People offering Life Support are required to attend basic training sessions provided through NLBC on effective listening, maintenance of confidentiality and working within boundaries and will also receive written guidance on these areas.

Information leaflets on Life Support, its role and limitations are available for all those receiving Life Support.

General ground rules for giving Life Support

1. Do respect the rights and dignity of every person as a unique individual, regardless of race, religion, nationality, language, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, age, size, employment, income, disability, health, abode, or criminal record
2. Do accept a person, don't judge them
3. Do give the person the safety, freedom and space to express themselves and to make their own decisions without force or manipulation, even when you disagree with the persons thinking, actions and life style
4. Do maintain confidentiality (though confidentiality does not necessarily mean secrecy – see "Confidentiality" section below)
5. Do work within your abilities and take appropriate steps to seek appropriate medical, legal or other professional help, where required
6. Do be honest and open and act with integrity
7. Do hold appropriate boundaries and be confidently assertive, when required, without aggression
8. Do promote an awareness of the spiritual element – practical and physical help are sometimes all that people need, but those giving Life Support should seek to be sensitive to the spiritual needs of the person also. If they feel capable, they may provide this themselves or, with the person's consent, contact the LSC to arrange for another person to be involved
9. Do encourage people to spend time with God on their own to ask for guidance and help as they deal with issues and circumstances
10. Don't get out of your depth
11. Don't misuse or abuse the trust that is bestowed upon you by a person
12. Don't expose any person to physical, psychological, verbal or spiritual harassment or tolerate others doing that. Examples of harassment include insults, unwelcome sexual behaviour, language or jokes, display of offensive materials, words, pictures, symbols, behaviour, gestures, or signals
13. Don't exploit people you are helping financially, sexually, emotionally, or in any other way
14. Don't create unhealthy dependencies for either yourself or the person to whom they are offering Life Support
15. Don't worry if something goes wrong, we are all human. Inform the LSC who will give guidance and help

Depending on the circumstances and the person/persons who are receiving Life Support, the following will be considered:

- In a one to one situation it would be usual for the supporter to be of the same sex as the person receiving care;
- In the case of a married couple receiving support, it may be appropriate for another married couple to provide it;
- The environment should be comfortable and free from interruptions;
- A public place may be advisable to avoid any compromising situations.

Specific ground rules for giving prayer support within Life Support

There are varying circumstances in which one to one prayer may be appropriate in addition to a specific request for prayer. Whatever the circumstances, please follow these guidelines:

1. The most appropriate prayer partners will be identified. For one to one prayer the people will usually be of the same gender, recognising that there may be times where this is not possible or appropriate.
2. Please ensure absolute confidentiality: see next section - Confidentiality
3. Please ask permission before you pray with someone (a simple "can I pray with you?").
4. Please seek permission before touching someone as you pray (e.g. "is it ok if I put my hand on your shoulder?").

Extra guidance when praying

1. Beware of the language you use as you pray. Keep it simple and appropriate to the person you are praying with, and be aware of the position of influence you have over someone in a potentially vulnerable state.
2. Don't make assumptions about what the person's needs are, even if you think you know. Ask how you can pray, and then take time to listen, both to the person and to God. Pay attention, don't forget what the person says and pray about those things, even if it then leads on to other things. Trust God! You don't have to fix the problem or tell God what to do, just invite God to come and watch what he's doing.

Confidentiality

1. Confidentiality ensures the information a person reveals to us is not disclosed to anyone else, without the person's prior knowledge and consent, apart from exceptional circumstances
2. Confidentiality establishes trust and a safe space for a person and for God to work
3. Confidentiality shouldn't be confused with secrecy (i.e. concealing information which could be significantly harmful to others) or collusion (i.e. explicitly or inherently cooperating with illegal or unethical behaviour)
4. Exceptions to confidentiality include when:
 - 4.1. You are required by law or a court to disclose certain information either to the Police or the Court
 - 4.2. You believe that others, particularly a child or vulnerable person, are or may be, at risk of harm or injury
 - 4.3. You believe that the person is at risk of harming themselves
5. Where you believe there is risk of harm, if you are not placing yourself at risk, you should encourage and support the person to disclose information themselves to the appropriate bodies, authorities or agencies. If this is not possible, you should seek the person's permission to pass information on to any appropriate bodies, authorities or agencies. If permission is not forthcoming, you should disclose information, which is only on a need to know basis, to the appropriate bodies, authorities or agencies without the person's consent
6. Do assume that what is spoken by the person is to be kept confidential. Where there is any doubt, make sure you clarify this - e.g. would the person like their situation to be kept confidential, be prayed for by a group of intercessors who would keep their details confidential or do they want it in the weekly news sheet!

7. Remember that confidentiality also extends to any written or electronic records and the safeguarding of these to protect the privacy of the person

Safeguarding adults at risk

Definition of an adult at risk: adults with needs for care and support who are experiencing, or are at risk of, abuse or neglect (Care Act 2014)

1. Life Support given must be given in accordance with the NLBC Safe to Grow Policy, and all people giving that Life Support must be aware of the policy
2. Life Support givers must be aware of the NLBC Safe to Grow Co-ordinator, how and where to access them and when it is appropriate to do so
3. DBS checks are not undertaken for all Life Support givers, those who have a DBS check for other work at NLBC will be selected if a vulnerable adult requires support (the LSC will keep a record of those supporters who have a DBS check and attended vulnerable adult training at NLBC)

Appendix 1

Life Support Coordinator Job Specification:

The duties of a Life Support Coordinator include:

1. Coordinating Life Support volunteers to ensure that the right people are assigned to appropriate pastoral situations to provide effective care for everyone who requires it.
2. Oversight of the church Life Support database
3. Pastoral visiting for the bereaved, those in hospital or going through a crisis and shared with the Pastors and appropriate volunteers from the Life Support team.
4. Liaising with Lifegroup leaders, youth leaders and other Team Leaders with a pastoral care responsibility to ensure particular needs are addressed and to develop Life Support in these groups.
5. Reporting to senior pastor, elders and Prayer and Vision meetings on a regular basis on the pastoral needs of the church and how they are being met.
6. Recruiting potential Life Support volunteers and bringing recommended names to the Senior Pastor and Safe to Grow co-ordinator for approval.
7. Delivering or organising training for new Life Support volunteers and others involved, such as Lifegroup leaders; and providing on-going learning opportunities.
8. Being a point of referral for all Life Support volunteers and others involved in pastoral care, for situations beyond their competence.
9. Keeping a list of appropriate agencies (e.g., the Association for Christian Counsellors) to refer people to for additional help.
10. Term of office will be 3 years, with a possible further three years to be confirmed by the elders
11. The Life Support Coordinator reports to the senior pastor and the leadership team

Life Support Coordinator Person Specification:

1. The Life Support Coordinator must:
2. Be a mature and Spirit-filled Christian
3. Have a passion for God and compassion for people
4. Be able to enthuse others to serve in Life Support
5. Be a Partner of New Life Baptist Church
6. Be committed to the Vision and Values of New Life Baptist Church
7. Be able to maintain confidentiality (and know when it is appropriate and necessary to pass on information for the protection of the person concerned or others)
8. Be able to avoid others becoming overly dependent upon him/her
9. Be reliable in timekeeping and commitment to the role
10. Along with the Pastors, be available to contact in crisis situations (except during holidays)
11. Be competent in administration to ensure Life Support is coordinated in such a way that people are not overlooked and appropriate Life Support volunteers are assigned quickly and effectively to pastoral situations
12. Be able to train and equip others in Life Support or organise appropriate trainers