30 January 2024

Oasis Church Bath

Pastoral Care and Confidentiality policy

Oasis Code of Conduct

The OCC states:

3.9 Staff and volunteers should treat with confidence personal information about employees or community members, whether obtained directly, indirectly or by inference. (However, there are certain situations where a commitment to confidentiality is overridden, namely where it is known that someone is at personal risk, there are safeguarding concerns or where the police demand information on a crime.)

This should be our default policy; however, in addition to the exceptional circumstances outlined above, there may be other occasions when we wish to share information more widely. We should therefore never promise confidentiality prior to hearing what the person has to say.

Possible Exceptions

There are a number of scenarios in which it might be helpful to pass on information shared in the context of a private conversation – in each case, permission should be sought before doing this.

Possible exceptions might include:

1. Where it would be helpful to coordinate a response to a particular need or concern
2. Where it is helpful for others on the pastoral team to be aware of the situation
3. Where there is value in other members (eg micro-hub leaders) being made aware
4. Making the whole church community aware, for prayer and interest (eg via the community news email)

If information is disclosed regarding criminal activity, this might also need to be reported (without necessarily informing the individual beforehand).

General Comments

- There may be occasions when someone wishes information to be shared more widely (eg via community news email), when we don't feel this would be appropriate.
- For purposes of accountability and support, it may sometimes be appropriate to share that a conversation has taken place, without revealing the content of the conversation.
- Each conversation we have will need to be judged on its own merits, in terms of significance and in the context of the support network an individual may have (and therefore, whether further support may be needed).
- Information may be shared in the context of supervision (formal or informal) – in this case, anonymity should be maintained if possible.
- Boundaries may sometimes be blurred between the roles of 'friend' and 'pastoral support' (and occasionally, 'employee') – it may sometimes be helpful or necessary to clarify the nature of a conversation in terms of those roles.

This policy is primarily for guidance of the pastoral care team, but may be distributed more widely within the church community.