St Antony's Priory
SPIRITUAL ACCOMPANIMENT

Risk Assessment: Spiritual Accompaniment Practice

We recommend that you complete your own risk assessment for offering spiritual accompaniment. Here you will find some considerations which will apply to your assessment. Please note this is not an exhaustive list and your assessment should apply to your particular set of circumstances.

1. Overview

Activity: Spiritual accompaniment
Settings:

- Your own home
- Online (video/phone)
- Rooms within a charitable organisation

Participants: Adults (not meeting the legal definition of vulnerable adults in the Uk)

Nature of service: Reflective listening, spiritual exploration, non-directive support

2. Risk Identification & Evaluation

A. Professional Liability Risk

Risk: A person may claim harm from your guidance, advice, or perceived influence (e.g., emotional distress, poor decisions attributed to sessions).

Likelihood: Medium - **Impact:** High

Factors increasing risk:

- Blurring boundaries with counselling/therapy
- Giving advice rather than accompanying
- Working with individuals who may be vulnerable but do not reach the legal definition of a vulnerable adult.
- Lack of clear disclaimers about your role

Recommendation: Strongly consider professional indemnity insurance (also called professional liability insurance).

B. Safeguarding & Vulnerability Risk

Risk: Working with individuals experiencing distress, trauma, or mental health issues.

Likelihood: Medium - **Impact:** High

Examples:

- Disclosure of abuse or self-harm
- Dependency on you
- Misunderstanding your role

Controls:

- Clear scope of practice statement
- Referral pathways (e.g. GP, counsellor, crisis services)
- Basic safeguarding awareness

Insurance relevance: Professional indemnity may help cover claims linked to safeguarding failures.

C. Physical Safety Risk (Face-to-Face at Home / Hired Rooms)

Risk: Injury occurring on your premises or during sessions.

Likelihood: Low–Medium - **Impact:** Medium–High

Examples:

- Trips/falls in your home
- Health emergencies during a session
- Allegations of unsafe environment

Controls:

- Safe, decluttered space
- Basic risk awareness (lighting, access)
- First aid readiness (recommended)

Recommendation: Consider public liability insurance, especially if:

- Clients attend your home
- You hire rooms (may be required by host organisation)

D. Boundary & Conduct Risk

Risk: Misunderstandings about the nature of the relationship.

Likelihood: Medium - **Impact:** High

Examples:

- Emotional dependency
- Allegations of inappropriate behaviour
- Dual relationships (especially if meeting in your home)

Controls:

- Written agreement/terms of engagement
- Clear boundaries and confidentiality policy
- Regular supervision (strongly recommended)

Insurance relevance: Professional indemnity may cover some claims, but prevention is key.

E. Online Practice Risk

Risk: Confidentiality breaches or data protection issues.

Likelihood: Medium - **Impact:** Medium–High

Examples:

- Conversations overheard
- Platform security issues
- Data storage breaches

Controls:

- Use secure platforms
- Private environment
- Basic GDPR awareness (if storing notes)

Recommendation: Check if insurance includes cyber or data-related elements.

F. Reputational Risk

Risk: Complaints or negative perceptions affecting your practice.

Likelihood: Medium - **Impact:** Medium

Controls:

- Ethical code (e.g. from a spiritual direction network)
- Transparent communication

Insurance relevance: Some policies include legal support for disputes.

G. Organisational Setting Risk (Charitable Organisation)

Risk: Unclear liability between you and the organisation.

Likelihood: Medium - **Impact:** Medium–High

Key questions:

- Does the charity's insurance cover you?
- Are you considered a volunteer, contractor, or independent practitioner?

Recommendation:

- Do not assume you are covered
- Obtain your own cover unless confirmed in writing