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## **A brief History of the Guidance for Developing Formation Programmes for Spiritual Directors**

### **2019 Conference for Spiritual Directors at Woodbrooke – 35 attendees**

During the plenary session there was an **agreed aim** – to set up a working party to discuss spiritual direction course content and the possibility of developing future Guidelines.

#### **The 8 working party members began meeting to work on a set of guidelines...**

Agreeing to follow the principles of SD:

- Listening to each other – thus modelling a spiritual direction course that is based on both **process** and **content**.

#### **The aim of the Guidelines was to offer both:**

- A tool for those involved in SD training to revise and review their courses
- And guidance for those starting new SD courses.

The Working Party soon realised that the scope of this piece of work was considerable and also that these two aspects would be meeting different needs.

### **2021 Online Conference for Spiritual Direction trainers – 60 attendees**

One of our patrons Abbot Christopher Jamison OSB opened the conference by reflecting on Benedictine Spirituality & Spiritual Direction.

Those attending had been asked to consider questions about their own course in terms of requirements, effects, attendees, discernment, content & process.

The conference offered 3 workshops with an opportunity to reflect on what were becoming the key aspects of formation courses:

- **Pre-requisites:** Identifying the key requirements of participants and the implications of these on a training programme.
- **Course process and content:** A framework for thinking about the content and processes that enable the appropriate development of participants.
- **Expected outcomes:** the abilities and dispositions that we would wish to see in those whom we would consider ready to accompany others.

## **Reflections emerging from ongoing meetings of the Working Party**

- Document title: Guidance rather than Guidelines, Formation rather than Training, noting the importance of language.
- How best to present structures and processes to assist those running an SD course.
- Reflecting on those who might attend these courses and why.
- The outcomes of a course alongside the value of discernment.
- The importance of congruency – i.e. that the process of formation reflects that of receiving and delivering SD.

## **The Guidance was also tested at St Anthony's Priory in Durham.**

By this time it was evident that the Guidance was not intended to include exactly what the course should cover but rather questions that a team developing a new course may wish to consider.

## **2022 Online interim 1-day conference - 50 attendees**

By request we held an interim 1-day conference – a second opportunity to share more widely the latest progress on the Guidance and facilitate discussion and feedback.

This was also an opportunity to discuss the effect that the pandemic was having on courses and the shift towards online spiritual direction and formation.

## **2023 Conference for SD trainers Woodbrooke - 40 attendees**

Extensive discussion and feedback on the Guidance by participants facilitated by our patron Revd Graham Sparkes.

## **The final year to launch: February 2023–2024**

- Feedback was gathered from those who attended Woodbrooke.
- Feedback was also gathered from a number of individuals representing SD courses and Christian traditions who gave their time to review the document.
- In the light of this feedback, the Working Party made some further key amendments and additions.
- The document was then proofread and professionally designed ready for final circulation.

The Guidance launch took place on 29 February 2024 – 50 people gathered to mark this event.

This was a culmination of 5 years of collaborative work and activity.

The original Spiritual Direction Guidelines of 2016 were also redesigned in the same format.

Both documents are available to download from our website: [www.retreats.org.uk](http://www.retreats.org.uk)

## **Our Thanks**

Our grateful thanks go to all those who have contributed to the process to bring about the launch of the Guidance.

- To members of the Working Party for their commitment and vision.
- To those who have attended and contributed to any of the events we have held to discuss the Guidance.
- To those who have offered their feedback to the document via email.
- To everyone gathered at the launch event for your support of this project and for celebrating this with us.