

THE PILSDON COMMUNITY

Sharing a common life of prayer, hospitality and work



A GUIDE

to becoming a part of the Pilsdon Community

**Information on how we live well together
for all who come and stay**

February 2022

Welcome

We welcome you to the Pilsdon Community and offer this handbook for everyone in the hope it will support your time with us. Within this guide there are pointers of how to live in community for the benefit and wellbeing of everyone who lives here and those who visit us from time to time.

As you read through its pages for the first time it may not initially sink in and so we recommend you read it over from time to time to help you recognise what you have learned and integrate your experience.

To live in community is about understanding we are all more than the labels people and professionals have given us. Realising we are not the centre of the world is challenging for all of us and living in community is one of the best ways to help us do this work.

As a community we are committed to honouring the natural world we live amidst, believing that we are bound in a network of relationship with the plant, insect and animal life around us. Living a life of simplicity, hospitality and prayer allows us to make space for these relationships, and to recognise how necessary they are for our thriving.

We are committed to treading lightly on the earth and are moving towards making better, more ethical choices in the purchasing of our provisions, using less plastic and choosing to buy from more responsible companies. Our garden and farming practices are also shaped by this commitment and we manage our grazing land and vegetable gardens in a way that nurtures biodiversity and habitat retention. It is our hope that visitors and guests will be impacted by this way of living and working, and that they might take away with

them a commitment of their own to respect the environment which sustains us all.

Everyone who lives here makes personal sacrifices for the benefit for the whole community if they are to thrive here. One of the most important qualities to develop is a capacity to understand true forgiveness. Forgiveness is a daily practice in community in both forgiving others and ourselves. Everyone is different and yet all of us have common themes of suffering in our lives and compassionate understanding of each other is essential. When we are willing to open our hearts to the acceptance offered here we can continue the life time's work of learning to love and this community will continue be a beacon for others.

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PART 1: OVERVIEW OF HOW WE LIVE TOGETHER

What is the Pilsdon Community?

The Pilsdon Community has existed for over 60 years. It is an intentional community with members, who share a Christian faith, offering hospitality to guests, wayfarers and visitors of all faiths or none. For members, the community is both home and place of work, but they are not paid 'staff'. Pilsdon's primary purpose is to offer a place of welcome and refuge to people of all backgrounds and circumstances whose lives are in crisis, as a result of mental illness, alcohol or drug addiction, relationship breakdown or homelessness. Guests stay for as long as they need and are able to contribute to the community – in some cases for many years, but most will expect to move on or back when they are ready. Wayfarers spend short periods of time in the community as part of a mobile way of life.

Members, headed by a Warden, live and work alongside guests, wayfarers and volunteers looking after the smallholding which provides much of the community's food. The community is a place in which the values of friendship, acceptance and care, together with a commitment to live simply and sustainably, are the basis on which to create a space in which people can feel safe, recover and repair.

The community is not a service provider in the way that many will be familiar with from experiences of mainstream health or social care

services. Whilst living in the community is, we hope, beneficial to health and well-being, it is not a Therapeutic Community. Members are not required to be trained counsellors or therapists and many of those who come to the community will need to go elsewhere for specialist help with addictions or mental health problems.

It is a place in which living and working alongside others enables people to give and receive the support we all need. Conversations about troubles and hopes take place whilst cooking supper or working in the garden. Meeting the needs of sheep and cows can be a way of meeting your own needs for valued activity. Learning new skills, whether cooking, dairy work, gardening or decorating, can become something you draw on throughout your life.

But underpinning everything that is important about Pilsdon are the relationships that are formed within the community. Relationships between members and guests, between guest and guest, volunteers and the shorter term but nevertheless significant relationships with wayfarers who come and go, are what makes this place different from more formal mental health or addictions services. Many of those who come here also find that the relationships they form with animals and with the place itself are important to building wellbeing. Relationships are not always easy, but Pilsdon provides the opportunity to live in an accepting environment with time and space to learn to live well with others.

So, caring for the community and ensuring that the community itself is safe and can endure is key to the way in which we ask people to live together. It is this that underpins the specific requests we make in this leaflet, and the expectations we have about how we try to live together.

Who's Who at Pilsdon

People come to Pilsdon for different reasons:

- Members come in order to live their Christian faith through life in community. Together they carry responsibility for the day to day running of the community. Sometimes some members have partners and children who also live in the community
- The Warden is a member and an ordained Church of England priest who offers spiritual guidance and who leads the community.
- The community has only one paid employee: An Operations Manager who has an important role in relation to the administration of the community
- Guests come looking for a place of safety or respite; a place to heal and to live as well as possible.
- Wayfarers are on the road for much of their lives and often sleep rough. They come to Pilsdon for one or two nights to have a bed, warm food, access to laundry and recreation.
- Volunteers come for different periods as residents, or on a day to day basis to help out and offer particular skills.

- Other visitors come for a break from normal routines and because they are interested in the life of the community.
- Because the community is a registered charity a Board of Trustees has legal responsibility to ensure the community is run properly and that it stays true to its original vision.

However, one of the things we recognise within the Pilsdon Community is that it is not always helpful to separate out people by categorising them in specific ways: the doctor/patient distinction does not apply here. Living together in community encourages us to recognise both the strengths and vulnerabilities that are part of what it means to be human. Members can be dealing with loss and insecurity, guests can and do offer care and support to others.

Whilst members, and in particular the Warden, have particular roles to play in keeping the community going (dealing with finance, decisions about who comes, the administration associated with any organisation) one of the things that people say when they first come to Pilsdon is that it is not immediately obvious who's who. The roles people play in the community do not always map on to their formal 'status'. Some guests have been here for many years and have taken on particular responsibilities because of the skills they brought with them or have learnt whilst they have been here.

Long standing guests are companions to the Warden and community members, and they hold a vital role in ensuring the stability of the community during times of membership and Warden transition.

Guests who have made the community their home are offered certain privileges to recognise the many years of service and commitment they have given to Pilsdon. Those who are new to community life can learn much from their experience and wisdom.

Looking after the community

Everyone who comes to the community has responsibilities for the way the community works. Those responsibilities relate to different aspects of community life: not only personal behaviour, but relationships with others who may be different in terms of background, personality, sexuality, religious beliefs or in many other ways.

Everyone has responsibilities to work to sustain the life of the community. Some of that work you may enjoy; other tasks may feel a bit of a chore, but still need to be done. Some tasks are shared by everyone. Other tasks may require particular skills or strengths and so are usually done by people who have the necessary ability. These may be shared and be an opportunity for learning. All newcomers need time to learn the ropes.

Group tasks vary with the season: planting vegetables in the spring, mucking out cowsheds in winter, collecting apples and making apple juice in autumn, these are all opportunities for a number of people to work together and can be fun. There are also times when people can work on their own, perhaps using skills to repair a broken table leg, repainting the wayfarers' accommodation, preparing the dining room or making a particular kind of bread.

What people do may be different, the important thing is that everyone contributes to the practical needs of the community. All those who come to Pilsdon need to be able to carry out some of the tasks that are necessary to sustain everyday life. People's capacities and skills are different, and in the community we try to create opportunities for people to both apply and develop these. We don't all do the same thing – but we all do something!

Everyone also has responsibility for abiding by the rather small number of definite rules that are important to ensure all feel safe here. ***The key rules are that the community is 'dry' no-one can drink alcohol whilst they are here, nor take illegal drugs. And if people are to feel safe, aggressive and violent behaviour cannot be tolerated. Those who have mental health problems are expected to take their medication as prescribed and to seek appropriate help that can prevent deteriorating health becoming too problematic for the individual and others. Breaking these rules will mean you will be asked to leave.***

Living in and benefiting from the community

The Pilsdon Community offers accommodation, shelter, food, meaningful work and support with the 'stuff' of life. It does not offer any form of targeted intervention or any form of personal care. We can summarise what is expected from those who spend time at Pilsdon, the opportunities it offers and the ways in which people can benefit from living in community:

- Experiencing and learning from living alongside others.
- A structured routine with expectations to take meals together, work together and thus avoid becoming isolated.
- Contributing to the process of growing and preparing food and enjoying the results of each other's work in the garden and kitchen.
- For those who share the Christian faith, the opportunity to pray together regularly.
- A safe space in which to repair things in your life that feel broken, or to develop an alternative way of living well.
- Building positive friendships.
- Learning and practicing new skills: including practical skills, skills of self-reflection and relational skills.
- Learning to both give and receive care: caring for yourself and others.
- Respecting others, being accepted and respected by others, maintaining appropriate boundaries of privacy and confidentiality.
- Recognising that we can all feel fragile and vulnerable at times and we should not take advantage of that in any way.
- Respecting and caring for the natural environment, ensuring minimal waste, avoiding the use of harmful materials; reducing, reusing and recycling where possible.

This means that everyone who comes to Pilsdon is expected to contribute to the community, rather than to come expecting that everything will be done for them. It means we recognise that we are all dependent on one another – we think the word **interdependence** is much more helpful than independence in thinking about how we should try to live together. And that interdependence encourages us to be aware of the way people, animals and the natural environment are interwoven and need to be cared for to ensure the wellbeing of all.

Good relationships are fundamental to living well together. Some friendships formed within community last beyond this time and play an important part of the process of development and healing. But ‘exclusive’ relationships are discouraged. Spending all or most of your time with one other person can mean not being aware of others and it can hinder your own experience. The safeguarding responsibilities of members and residential volunteers mean that we cannot allow intimate relationships to form with guests.

PART 2: INFORMATION ON DAY TO DAY LIFE AT PILSDON

The Pattern of Daily Life

For everyone who comes to live or stay at Pilsdon, there are both **expectations** and **opportunities**. These form part of the pattern of daily life in which we seek to ensure a balance between work, rest, leisure and reflection.

Prayer

The Community has a pattern of prayer in the Christian tradition which takes place four times a day. These are optional at all times - there is no expectation that people should participate in prayers or worship. The Church and the house chapel are available for individual reflection or meditation. Please ask a member if you would like prayers to be said for you or someone else. Every Sunday evening at 6.30 we hold a service of Holy Communion when we are often joined by visitors and to which all are welcome. We do not proselytize and ask those who come to stay with us not to do so either.

If you wish to go to a particular church on a Sunday morning, or if you have other faith needs, please let us know and we will do our best to accommodate them.

Meals

An important part of Community living is eating meals together. Everyone is expected to be at lunch and supper. This is a time for the community to come together and we ask that, if there is any reason why you cannot come for a meal, you let one of the members know personally. Breakfast is a more flexible, help-yourself meal. We try to meet people's food preferences - for instance, vegetarian options are always available - and to respect food allergies and intolerances. Please let us know if you have significant dietary needs, though very specialist diets cannot be catered for. A short prayer of thanks is

offered for the meal before we sit down. At the end of the meal notices and news are shared before we leave the table. Everyone takes a turn at helping with the washing up.

Meals provide an opportunity to get to know others. You may sit where you like in the dining room though the Warden traditionally sits in the same place. We encourage you to sit with different people at different times to avoid exclusive groups developing.

For health and safety reasons, food should not be taken out of the dining room, kitchen or storeroom, which should only be accessed by those preparing meals. Please do not keep anything other than fruit or snacks in bedrooms.

Work

Everyone is expected to help with jobs in the house, gardens and smallholding. Inevitably some of the jobs are more interesting than others, and all are important to keep life in the Community safe and enjoyable for everyone. We have a weekly rota to allocate jobs to people fairly, and from time to time you may be asked to help with other work as needed. You will not be asked to do something that you are unable to do, but you will also be encouraged to use your existing skills and to develop new ones. In some cases: care of animals, use of tools and other equipment for example, you will be working with someone who has particular knowledge about how things need to be done. It is important to follow guidance both for your own safety and that of others. Some equipment (eg chain saws) requires specific

authorisation and training. Most work is done from Monday to Friday, but some tasks still have to be done at weekends, for instance, preparing meals and looking after the animals. Work is an important part of life in the Community - doing nothing is not an option!

Leisure

There are opportunities to enjoy a range of leisure activities at Pilsdon. We have a library with a large variety of books; there is a games room with equipment for snooker, pool, darts, table tennis and fitness training; there is a TV room; and facilities for arts and crafts activities. The local area is great for walking, we make occasional trips to the beach and it is sometimes possible to use local leisure facilities for swimming. There is a weekly shopping trip into Bridport.

Living at Pilsdon does involve a certain loss of freedom: you cannot simply go off the premises and occasional off-site activities need to be agreed with a Community Member. But we also recognise that you may have significant relationships with others who are not at Pilsdon which are important for you to maintain and develop. Please discuss how to do this with the Warden or a Community Member.

Tea and coffee are available every morning at 11am and afternoon at 4.30pm in the Common Room (or in the garden in fine weather). These are occasions when people are encouraged to gather for conversation and relaxation together. Conversations can range over many different topics!

Practicalities

Fire

All bedrooms have detailed notices concerning fire procedures. Please read them and make sure you know what to do in case of fire. The Assembly Point is the church. Alarms are normally tested after lunch on a mid-week day. A random fire practice will take place occasionally to test our responsiveness to the fire alarms and these must be taken seriously.

Laundry

Bed linen and towels are provided by the community. You are responsible for changing your own sheets and towels. Please put dirty linen in the baskets provided.

The laundry is available for you to do your own personal washing after 11am on weekdays, as long as all community washing has been completed by then. We ask you to please use eco-friendly laundry detergent which is available to buy in the shop. **Please do not overload** the machines or put unsuitable objects in them e.g. Duvets, Trainers and Bags. These machines are very expensive and as with all our equipment we ask you to respect and take care of them as if they were your own. As part of our commitment to limit our impact on the environment, please dry your things outside if the weather is fine, or on the racks above the freezers. Please ask if you want to use the tumble drier. The tumble dryer must not be used after dark. Please leave the laundry clean and tidy at all times.

Please do not use laundry facilities if you are visiting for a weekend or a short period of time.

Medication and Healthcare

Community Members will help you attend medical appointments, including dentists. Please ask them to support you with an e-consult or book you an appointment with the doctor.

Appointments will be put in the community diary so that transport can be arranged. We try to combine trips to doctors, dentists etc so that the numbers of journeys is limited and encourage everyone to visit dentists during the weekly shopping trip where possible.

It is important that Guests share information about their medication so that repeat prescriptions can be ordered for you. You will be given a week's supply of your medication at a time unless otherwise agreed. You are responsible for keeping it secure and for taking your own medication as prescribed. It is important to follow medical guidance regarding prescription medication. If you are having problems with your medication please do not simply stop taking it. Talk to a member and then to your doctor. Sometimes stopping medication or taking too much can lead to behaviour that might be harmful to you or other people in the community.

Money and Rent

Many guests will be eligible for benefits such as Universal Credit and Housing Benefit, although this can take a while to come through. Our weekly rent needs to be paid from these benefits or your personal means. Those who have bank accounts when they arrive will be expected to set up a Direct Debit for their rent to be paid to the community.

Our Operations Manager will help you to put in a housing benefit application. If you are having difficulty with cash flow please come and talk to a member so that we help with budgeting.

After payment of rent, you should be left with a reasonable amount of 'pocket money' for toiletries, chocolate and sweets, tobacco, etc. You can buy eco-friendly laundry liquid for use in our washing machines, chocolates and tobacco from the office at specific times.

There is a £40 limit on tobacco purchases on credit. The 'boutique' has good quality donated clothing.

Visitors staying for a week's respite, those coming for a retreat or those on sabbatical, will be asked to contribute for their stay. This will be discussed with you in advance and invoiced on your arrival. Please tell us if you have problems meeting the full cost. All other visitors are also invited to make a donation towards the costs of their stay.

Bedrooms and Bathrooms

Consideration for others is important with regard to tidiness, noise, lights and moving around during the night. If you want to listen to the radio or to music during the night please use headphones. You will need to keep your bedroom and bathroom clean and safe. Please respect others' privacy and only go into others' rooms if you are invited.

Smoking

Smoking is only permitted in the smokers' shelter in the front garden, in the TV room, in a few of the East Wing guest bedrooms and outside. Please note: visitors' bedrooms, the wayfarers' dormitory, all general rooms and all rooms in the main house are non-smoking.

Telephones, TVs, DVDs, Radios, Stereos, Computers

A free phone is provided for your use. Official calls, concerning benefits etc. may be made from the office. You can use your own mobile phone but please exercise care so as not to be a nuisance to others or if you do not wish to be overheard. They should not be switched on during meal times. Please use headphones at night in your room and please do not use personal devices for music or videos in the common room or AGA room. The shared TV should not be on during normal working hours, that is, up to 4pm. There are Saturday night film evenings in the library. There is also shared use of a computer which is set up with safeguards: inappropriate sites are blocked. We ask that no one person use the computer for more than 30 minutes at a time as a courtesy to others. We do not encourage people to spend lengthy periods on the

internet or on phones. Guests and visitors can use WIFI in the library to access the internet.

Time Away

We expect new Guests *not* to spend time away from Pilsdon until they have had a chance to settle in over the first three months. Trips away to visit family and friends or for a break should always be planned in advance with specific dates agreed with the Warden prior to a trip. You will be expected to come back as planned. It is the custom that you should take responsibility for asking people to cover your jobs whilst away as this gives an opportunity to build interdependence. You will also need to see the appropriate member in good time to ensure you have enough medication with you to cover the period of your trip.

Transport

Guests are not generally permitted to drive any motorised forms of transport whilst staying at Pilsdon. When you need to get to an appointment, a member or volunteer will take you.

Visitors

Family and friends who you want to remain in contact with are welcome to visit you at Pilsdon. Such visits must be planned in advance and discussed with community members. Visitors are welcome to join the community for meals if enough notice is given. Staying overnight may also be possible - please speak to the Warden.

Gifts

Please do not give gifts to any children living in the community, or food to our dogs, or feed our animals outside of normal feeding times.

Other Help

We can accommodate some people with mobility problems, but not all accommodation is accessible and some of the vegetable garden can be difficult in a wheelchair – particularly when it is muddy.

We do not require guests to set particular targets or to agree to regular timetabled mentoring sessions. You may find it helpful to keep a journal and if you would find it helpful to discuss worries, problems or plans for the future, the Warden, members and some volunteers will provide a listening ear.

The community has well established relationships with local health and social care services, and with housing agencies. We can support you if you need to negotiate access to other services, including help with finding move-on accommodation and if you need access to advice about welfare benefits. Coming to Pilsdon does not mean anyone has an automatic right to housing or any other source of support.

Local services that people coming to Pilsdon use include:

- Citizen's Advice Bureau
- Dentist NHS

- Job Centre
- Local GPS in Beaminster.
- Magna Housing Association
- On line courses where appropriate
- Steps to Wellbeing programme in Bridport

Rights and Safeguards

We have emphasised that Pilsdon works as a community which aims to keep formal rules to a minimum and offers help through positive relationships rather than any formal intervention. If members do have any concerns about aspects of behaviour or relationships within the community, they will talk to you about this. In serious situations they may give you a warning about behaviour that is not acceptable for the good of the community. We encourage anyone who has any concerns about the way they are treated whilst they are here, or about any aspect of the way the community operates, to talk with a member or the Warden as soon as possible. The aim is to resolve problems quickly. If concerns remain, it is possible to refer the matter to the Trustees (see the back of this leaflet for how to contact them). If you have serious concerns that relate to the Warden, you can go directly to the Chair of Trustees. If you want to have a friend or advocate with you when making a formal complaint like this that can be arranged.

The Pilsdon Community is committed to:

- Keeping the community as a safe environment in which to live and work.
- Maintaining privacy and confidentiality for all. There are some circumstances in which we are legally permitted and expected to share information with Third Parties: for example Housing and Benefit Agencies and references you may need to move on. We only keep records that are appropriate and in line with the Data Protection Act. We will make your records available to you on occasion if requested and will inform you should this be required.
- As you would expect the community has series of policies and procedures covering safeguarding, health and safety, safe working, complaints, and data protection etc. These are updated as needed and are in line with current legislation. The policies set standards for everyone in the community and set out good practice to protect the well-being of everyone. This is especially in relation to the different responsibilities of members, volunteers, guests and visitors. These policies are available on request and any questions relating to them are welcomed.
- Respecting everyone's right to respect and dignity. We are clear that should intimate relationships develop this should be discussed in the light of safeguarding principles.

- Members, including the Warden, and volunteers are forbidden to be in intimate relationships with Guests.
- Maintaining an environment in which all are accepted for their humanity, but abuse and aggressive behaviour to others are not accepted. Therefore, we are committed to responding appropriately to any instances of such behaviour.
- Ensuring any concerns can be raised quickly and easily, without fear, and dealt with fairly. Our aim is to seek resolutions of difficulties early so that we can continue to live well together.
- In those situations where it does become necessary to ask someone to leave we enable this to happen with as much dignity and as little disruption to community life as possible.
- Giving equal opportunities within the life of the community regardless of gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religious belief or viewpoint, disability, marital status, social position, age.

Full information about our policies in these areas can be found in our office.

Anyone spending time in the community has the right to expect the community to take responsibility if it is felt these commitments are not being fulfilled.

For a current list of Trustees please ask at the office.