



FAITH MATTERS

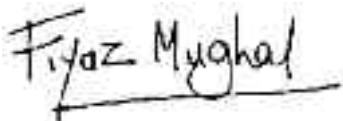
The role of chaplains in  
public sector institutions



Experiences from  
Muslim communities

Chaplaincy is a service which has become associated with public sector service delivery and this document provides information on the role of chaplains in public sector institutions and outlines some of the best practice undertaken through the work of Muslim chaplains in various institutions and sectors.

We hope that this document may support building understanding of the role of chaplains and improve the support available for the work of chaplain in the public sector.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fiyaz Mughal". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Fiyaz Mughal OBE FCMI  
*Director, Faith Matters*

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**The role of chaplains in public sector institutions:**  
**Experiences from Muslim communities**

March 2010  
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## Foreword

We live in an increasingly diverse and multicultural society, where our public institutions serve people of many different backgrounds and faiths. It is important to ensure that all those using or working in public institutions have access to services that meet their needs and receive the highest standards of care, including spiritual care. Chaplains have a vital role to play in delivering this – providing religious and pastoral support and helping institutions to understand the religious, cultural and spiritual needs of the communities they serve. This includes caring for individuals who may be particularly vulnerable, such as students away from home, prisoners or those suffering sickness and bereavement.

As a varied group of Muslim community organisations, between us we have worked with public institutions including the prison service and the NHS to help develop comprehensive structures and support for chaplains working in these institutions. We have seen some excellent work to support high standards of chaplaincy in the public sector, including that done by other faiths and multi-faith teams. However, we are also aware that the level of support and standards for chaplains can be variable, and we believe that there is a need to address gaps where existing provisions do not exist.

As Muslim community organisations, we have witnessed excellent examples of best practice amongst Muslim chaplains working in the public sector. This document, developed by Faith Matters and built on the work of The Experience Corps, captures that best practice and we hope will enable it to be shared more widely to help contribute to consistently high standards in chaplaincy across the public sector. We understand this document was originally intended to provide guidance on best practice in Muslim chaplaincy. However, chaplaincy is a multi-faith profession and our view is that it is vital that all chaplains have the skills and support they need, particularly when it comes to protecting vulnerable individuals in their care, and that the best way to achieve this is by faiths working together to support chaplaincy as a whole. We feel the practice captured here has many uses – from helping institutions understand the range of issues to be considered when employing a chaplain, to enabling those wishing to become chaplains to understand the demands of the role. We hope that others working in this field feel the same way.

We would like to see this document form the basis of further work, to continue to support chaplains working in our public institutions and help ensure they have the skills and support they need to meet the needs of communities and support the vulnerable.

Asgar Halim Rajput – Association of Muslim Chaplains in Education.

Yousif Al-Khoei – Al Khoei Foundation

Shahid Raza – British Muslim Forum

Julie Siddiqi – Islamic Society of Britain

Shuja Shafi – Muslim Council of Britain

Shokat Malik – Sufi Muslim Council.

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Overview

This document provides information on the role of chaplains in public sector institutions such as prisons, universities, further education colleges, hospitals and, to a more limited extent, courts. It draws on the experience of Muslim chaplains and communities, to identify best practice in both the skills, competences and experiences of chaplains and the processes for appointment of chaplains in the public sector. It is designed for use by public institutions, current and prospective chaplains, faith organisations and training organisations. It is intended to supplement existing guidance and support the development of chaplaincy services which meet the spiritual, pastoral, religious and cultural needs of Muslim and other communities and ensuring the highest standards of care for staff and service users.

## 1.2 Background

Chaplains play an important role in communities and public institutions throughout England, providing spiritual, pastoral and religious support to meet social and spiritual needs. Chaplains working in public institutions such as prisons, universities and hospitals are often required to deal with difficult circumstances and to support and protect individuals in highly vulnerable situations.

There are excellent examples of best practice in chaplaincy across the public sector and some of these are outlined in annex A in this document. However, while some institutions have rigorous structures and standards in place to support chaplaincy services, in others the situation is much more variable. It is important to ensure that all chaplains working across the public sector have the skills and access to the support they need within an environment that is challenging and fast moving.

Faith communities have always played an important role in the development and delivery of chaplaincy services, with different religious traditions working with various public institutions to develop structures and standards appropriate to the needs of their communities. Faith based community and voluntary organisations have also helped develop these services. This document recognises the valuable work of Muslim chaplains across the public sector and looks at how this can be shared more widely to contribute to consistently high standards in the skills, knowledge, training and recruitment of chaplains in public institutions.



The Government commissioned first The Experience Corps and then Faith Matters to work with a range of Muslim community organisations, chaplaincy associations and chaplains, to highlight and disseminate best practice to help ensure that all chaplains have the skills and support to meet the needs of people in their care. The guidance has been developed by Faith Matters from documentation received from public institutions and faith organisations, the work of The Experience Corps and on the basis of consultation and interviews with public institutions, faith organisations, chaplain's associations, individual chaplains, government departments and other groups. It is designed to enable the needs, experiences and best practice of Muslim communities to be represented in a way that can be used to strengthen chaplaincy services where existing provisions are not already in place.

This work should be seen in the context of the broader work being led by Muslim communities to empower faith leaders as effective and confident community leaders who can play a leading role in supporting the vulnerable and building strong and resilient communities.

## 1.3 Purpose of this guidance

Based on case studies from Muslim chaplaincy, this guidance highlights best practice in:

- a. the skills, knowledge, competences and experiences of chaplains working in public sector institutions; and
- b. the processes for recruiting and engaging chaplains in the public sector.

It has been designed to ensure that best practice from Muslim chaplains and communities contributes to:

- building understanding and improving the support available for the work of Muslim and other chaplains in public sector institutions;
- developing a comprehensive benchmark of the skills, knowledge and understanding of chaplains to help deliver consistently high standards across all public sector institutions;
- developing processes and procedures that are relevant to the current and future needs of Muslim and other communities and;
- enhancing information available for individuals who aspire to train as chaplains.



It should be noted that this guidance is voluntary and should be considered within the context of:

- institutions' existing HR and legal policies and procedures;
- existing guidance and structures for chaplaincy developed by other faith institutions; and
- the particular needs and requirements of the institution and its service users.

## **1.4 Intended audience**

This guidance is intended for:

- public institutions that employ or work with chaplains;
- faith organisations involved in public sector chaplaincy where guidance is not already in place;
- faith leaders working or looking to work in public sector chaplaincy; and
- institutions that provide training to chaplains.

## **1.5 Benefits of using this guidance**

This guidance should help:

- institutions to consider how their chaplaincy services are meeting the spiritual, pastoral, religious and cultural needs and providing the highest standards of care for their service users and staff;
- chaplains in their personal and professional development;
- faith organisations, where existing guidance is not in place, to provide effective support to institutions and faith leaders in the selection and development of chaplaincy; and
- those looking to become chaplains to understand the requirements and demands of the role.

## 2 Understanding the chaplaincy role

### 2.1 Why are chaplains important?

Public institutions serve increasingly multi-cultural, multi-faith and spiritually diverse communities. In this context, chaplaincy has emerged as a valuable means of ensuring public institutions can meet the different needs of people of all faiths and spiritualities. Chaplains provide an expert resource with an important role in ensuring the spiritual, emotional and religious welfare of service and staff users. Their work helps ensure institutions are sensitive to and respectful towards religious, spiritual and cultural needs. They provide pastoral, theological and spiritual care and guidance to those who need support through difficult situations.

### 2.2 Who are chaplains?

Chaplains are members of faith communities working in a specific institutional context, such as a prison, hospital or university. This may be in a full or part time, paid or voluntary capacity. Their exact role will vary according to the nature of the institution but is generally characterised by the provision of advice, guidance, care and support in spiritual, emotional and religious matters. Chaplains may also be required to provide religious services and duties. A common requirement is that they are able to provide a service of care to everyone, regardless of their respective faith communities.

The role of a Muslim chaplain is influenced by religious traditions and the theology of pastoral care specific to Islam. In the Muslim traditions, chaplaincy has always been seen as a vocation for all, where pastoral or specific religious care can be carried out by anyone of the Muslim faith and not just an imam or religious leader. In contemporary societies, this tradition is evolving as Muslim chaplains start to take responsibility for pastoral care of a whole community – such as in a university or hospital. Muslim chaplains today work within a multi-faith context, providing specialist input to help ensure the spiritual, cultural and religious needs of Muslim communities are met as part of the public sector's commitment to meet the needs of all communities.

A clear distinction needs to be made between an imam and a chaplain. An imam is a recognised leader or a religious teacher who is able to lead prayers in a mosque. Imams can serve as chaplains within institutions, but chaplains are not always qualified to be imams. This distinction is important since some sectors employ chaplains who are not imams.

## 2.3 What do chaplains do?

Chaplains have a range of duties which will vary depending on the specific institution context. They will typically involve some combination of the following:

- provision of pastoral, spiritual and emotional care and support;
- guidance on religious issues and matters of faith and spiritual development;
- advice on the spiritual, religious and cultural needs, including dietary requirements, of different groups;
- support to vulnerable individuals or those in time of need;
- relationship building with and between faith communities;
- being a point of liaison between institutional staff and service users, including signposting and disseminating information on services; and
- undertaking generic duties which may include day to day administration duties/record keeping and the supervision of employed staff or volunteers.

They may also provide more formal religious duties such as:

- leading religious services or communal prayers;
- conducting religious rites and ceremonies;
- providing religious instruction, or faith-based training; or
- providing bereavement counselling.

## 3 Framework of best practice: Competences, skills and experiences

The range of skills required of a chaplain varies from institution to institution. For example a chaplain working in a court, where people pass through in a short space of time, will have a different role to a chaplain in a university where there will be an ongoing relationship. This framework has identified the following eight competences and skills (3.1 to 3.8 below) as being common to chaplains working across all public institutions and sectors. It has been developed through consultation with Muslim chaplains, institutions, professional associations, Muslim community organisations and organisations representing Christian, Jewish, Bahai, Buddhist, Sikh and Hindu faith communities. It explains why each area is important and set out benchmarks which demonstrate best practice for each area.

### 3.1 Faith requirements

Chaplains should be able to provide effective theological and spiritual advice and guidance. To do so, it is important that they are able to demonstrate comprehensive knowledge, and be a credible representative of their faith. Benchmarks for faith requirements could include:

- Being a committed member of their faith community e.g. regular with prayer; has a demonstrable awareness of their obligations.
- Attainment of a relevant educational background/qualification or relevant experience that is recognised by a theological institution or university and which equates to degree level or its equivalent.
- Formal endorsement from a particular faith community.
- Understanding of different traditions within a faith.

### 3.2 Spiritual leadership

Staff and service users may look to chaplains as a source of spiritual guidance and leadership. Benchmarks for spiritual leadership could include:

- Ability to arrange or lead worship and organise teaching groups.
- Willingness to provide opportunities for spiritual development for different traditions within a faith.

- Willingness to be a resource to both staff and service users.
- Commitment to collaborative working as part of a multi-faith and diverse team.
- Ability to take on the role of mediator or provide appropriate guidance on mediation in issues of tension between service users, staff and institutions.
- Ability to be a point of reference for staff and management in matters of religious and/or spiritual care and support.
- Ability to advocate the spiritual and religious needs of service users to management and staff.
- Ability to apply ethical principles to issues, such as organ donation, and to take advice and convey this to service users.

### 3.3 Pastoral care

The majority of chaplains will be called on to provide a service of care, counselling and support on spiritual, emotional and religious issues. They will generally have responsibility towards the personal and social wellbeing of those who come to them and will need to be capable of dealing with a wide range of issues in challenging and difficult circumstances. Benchmarks of effective pastoral care could include:

- Commitment to providing pastoral care to members of all religious traditions or none, including staff, with the same commitment as if they were members of his or her own tradition.
- Understanding and respect for diversity within a faith and between faiths.
- Understanding of problems which may be experienced by wider sections of the community e.g. domestic violence/abuse, forced marriage, gambling, alcohol, use of narcotics, mental health issues and ability to respond with empathy and sensitivity, referring on to other agencies/specialists either within the institution or other local authority and community support services as required.
- Ability to work with other faith chaplains and support services within the institution to deliver pastoral care.
- Understanding of the nature and limits of confidentiality of individual service-users and commitment to respecting the confidential nature of privileged information of an individual or institution.
- Ability to demonstrate good listening skills and empathise and connect with all service users and staff.
- Ability to demonstrate willingness and commitment in the provision of pastoral care.

## 3.4 Communication

The chaplaincy role requires the ability to communicate effectively with a wide range of audiences in different, and often difficult, circumstances. To deliver an excellent service of advice, care and guidance demands both communication skills and an understanding of communication techniques. Benchmarks of both could include:

### 3.4.1 Communication skills and techniques

- Ability to speak English to a level that allows easy understanding.
- Ability to communicate effectively with colleagues, service users and the general public, using different styles of communication as appropriate.
- Ability to summarise written or verbal information and present written comments clearly.
- Ability to disseminate information effectively and efficiently.
- Capacity to be accessible and open to all.
- Ability to be a positive influence on others and create acceptance and support for ideas.
- Multi-lingual language skills to aid communication with those who may have limited English.
- Ability to use counselling skills effectively.
- Ability to use reflective communication skills which may include listening and posing reflective questions to service users.
- Ability to communicate across different groups of people with a variety of backgrounds e.g. young adults and the very old, those with mental health issues, disabilities.
- Understanding of the potential impact of different contexts and cultures on any communication.
- Knowledge of different communication techniques relevant to different circumstances e.g. breaking bad news or exploring difficult issues.
- Understanding of different methods and mediums for communication e.g. online communication.
- Ability to be able to play a constructive role in conflict resolution when it arises.



## 3.5 Equality

Chaplains have an important role in ensuring institutions are able to respond appropriately and sensitively to the diversity of the communities that they serve. To do this effectively, it is important they are able to ensure equal treatment for all and demonstrate respect for the beliefs and practices of others. Benchmarks of commitment to equality could include:

### 3.5.1 Treating other equally

- Ability to be non-judgemental; with commitment to fulfilling the chaplaincy role without discrimination of any kind – age, race, gender, sexual orientation, religion or belief, disability.
- Willingness to refer individuals to alternative support services in a compassionate way where issues arise which are difficult to reconcile with core principles of their faith.
- Knowledge, or is willing to develop knowledge and ensure the implementation of equal opportunities policies and procedures.

### 3.5.2 Respect for the beliefs and practices of others

- Commitment to respecting the rights of individuals to their beliefs and practices, especially those under his/her responsibility, and to refrain from imposing own viewpoint.

### 3.5.3 Maintaining contact with wider faith groups, local and national

- Commitment to the fostering of good relations and the involvement of his/her faith community with other faiths and the wider community.

## 3.6 Knowledge of systems, procedures and policies

The chaplaincy role is complex and requires the ability to act as an interface between service users, the institution and other support services. To provide an effective service of care within the specific institutional context requires a clear understanding of wider systems, procedures and policies. Benchmarks of knowledge of systems, procedures and policies could include:

- Knowledge and understanding of the institution's purpose and values.
- Knowledge of other support services and resources (internal and external), including advocacy and interpreting services, which may be able to assist service users and staff.



- Knowledge, or is willing to develop knowledge and ensure the implementation of, the legislation, policies and procedures that affect health and safety at work and security of premises, people and equipment, including legislation about disability and data protection.
- Understanding of policies concerning confidentiality of information.
- Knowledge, or is willing to develop knowledge, of the institution's reporting procedures resulting in effective liaison between the chaplaincy team, the management and also between staff and service users.

## **3.7 Personal and professional development**

Chaplaincy within the public sector is becoming increasingly professionalised. In this context, a commitment to personal and professional development is crucial to the chaplaincy role. It helps ensure individuals develop their expertise and ability to deliver the best possible standards of care to service users. Through their spiritual and professional expertise, chaplains also have a valuable contribution to make to the development of others. Benchmarks of personal and professional development could include:

### **3.7.1 Personal development**

- Awareness of own learning needs and interests and how to address these.
- Commitment to continually working to improve personal skills, knowledge and practice.
- Ability to work well with superiors, and agree a regularly reviewed personal development plan.
- Knowledge, or willing to develop knowledge, of available courses, events and training facilities within institutions.

### **3.7.2 Development of others**

- Ability to provide professional support for staff members and departmental colleagues.
- Ability to contribute to the induction and training of others and their evaluation.

## 3.8 Protecting vulnerable individuals

Chaplains are often called upon to deliver support to individuals in particular vulnerable situations e.g. students away from their home and communities, prisoners and those experiencing sickness or bereavement. It is important that they are able to protect these individuals, particularly those in a situation where they may be exploited by others. Training and support in these areas is essential. Benchmarks of ability to protect vulnerable individuals could include:

- Ability to recognise how and where vulnerable individuals may be exploited by others.
- Understanding the referral process to support vulnerable individuals and protect them from harm.
- Ability to provide spiritual support and advice to those who seek comfort.

In some cases, it may also be relevant to consider:

- Ability to recognise ideologies that are non-conducive to national security, whether expressed by individuals or groups.
- Commitment to supporting, including providing theological support to, individuals who may be vulnerable to these arguments.

## 4 Recruitment processes and engagement of chaplains

Some public institutions already have formal standards and recruitment processes in place for the employment of chaplains. In others, the process may be more informal. This guidance highlights important points to consider when developing recruitment processes for chaplaincy services to ensure these are relevant, and meet the needs of Muslim and other faith communities. It is important to ensure compliance with relevant equalities legislation related to ensuring a fair recruitment process throughout the process.

### The process

#### 4.1 Establishing whether there is a need for the post

When considering whether there is a need to engage a new chaplain, it may be helpful to look at the following factors:

- The ratio of service user to chaplain. Is current chaplaincy provision sufficient to meet the needs of service users?
- The expectations and demands of service users. Is there a demand for particular spiritual or religious services or support, such as leadership of communal prayers?
- The balance of a multi-faith team. Is current chaplaincy provision reflective of the religious diversity of service users?
- The range and diversity of the faith communities. Which denominations, for example, may be using services within the institution?

It is also important to think at this stage about how to ensure the necessary resources are available to support a chaplain.

## 4.2 Consultation – ensuring an inclusive process in developing the post

Consulting others internally and externally will ensure that there is an understanding of the need and function of the post.

- Internal consultation could include service users, the chaplaincy team and other key personnel including human resource directors or faith advisers if available.
- External consultation could include local faith leaders from recognised organisations/places of worship such as the local place of worship, professional chaplains associations and faith community bodies who can also provide a useful source of expertise when developing the post of chaplain.

## 4.3 Designing the role

Different institutions will have different needs. It is essential that the role description and person specification are carefully designed to ensure that the institution engages someone with the necessary skills and experience. A starting point for this could be the eight suggested competences set out in Section 3 of this document. It will be important to ensure the role is designed in accordance with the institution's existing guidance and relevant legislation. External organisations such as chaplaincy training institutions or professional chaplaincy associations and local faith leaders may also be helpful in supporting the process. They can provide information on the religious sensitivities that need to be observed, such as ensuring that recruitment does not take place at the same time as important days for prayer.

Steps could include:

- identifying the competences required with reference to the post of chaplain
- deciding upon the type of experience necessary (i.e. at entry level or as a multi-faith chaplaincy co-ordinator)
- preparing a formal job description based on competences, skills and experience
- identifying the continuing professional development needs relevant to the job role e.g. possible training needs for new chaplains
- deciding on type of appointment based on the needs assessment – e.g. is the post going to be permanent, fixed-term, voluntary or on-call? Is it open to part-time working and job sharing?

- deciding on the salary or reimbursements to be made in accordance with relevant legislation and pay bands
- setting up a recruitment file, including an audit trail and recruitment checklist, to keep track and accurate records of the recruitment process.

## 4.4 Advertising

Advertising for chaplains should be broad in order to ensure a wide range of suitably qualified candidates come forward for the post. This could include advertising the role:

- in newspapers and local media
- in specialist and faith-based press
- online through relevant internet sites
- in the institution's own publication and websites
- through local multi-faith and interfaith groups and religious establishments.

## 4.5 Ways in which applicants apply

- Requiring applicants to fill out a standard application form enables institutions to make a fair and comprehensive assessment of their skills, competences and experience in relation to the role.
- Applicants should be given equal and reasonable access to adequate information about the job and its requirements. This will help create a fair and open application process and reduce the number of inappropriate applications.
- The closing date for applications needs to be clear.

## 4.6 Recruitment materials

Providing candidates invited for interview with full information about the job and its requirements in the form of a recruitment pack will help them assess their own suitability for the post, prepare for the recruitment process and determine any questions they may have about the nature of the role.

The following information can form a useful part of the recruitment pack:

- generic material about the institution, its structure, services and values
- an organisational chart

- a detailed role profile and essential and desirable person specification
- details of the recruitment process e.g. interview date, interview panel composition and additional assessment procedures.

## **4.7 Processing applications – sifting and short listing**

The sifting process serves to match the applicants as closely as possible to the job and person specification and to produce a shortlist of people to interview. The following principles will help ensure the fair and effective processing of applications:

- prompt acknowledgment of applications
- following HR policies of confidentiality
- having two or more people to undertake such sifting, including at least the direct line manager/supervisor, to avoid any possibility of bias
- having the direct line manager/supervisor who undertook the sifting process at the interview stage present, so as to provide consistency across the entire process.

It may be useful for candidates to see the environment in which they would be working, and, if they are to be part of a team, for the current team members to meet the candidate.

## **4.8 Endorsing authorities/faith community groups**

- In order to ensure short-listed candidates have the relevant theological and spiritual background and expertise (i.e. a track record of working in the relevant sector), it may be helpful to involve external faith organisations, faith centres, and professional chaplaincy associations in the process of short listing and selecting candidates.
- It is best practice not to rely on the advice of a single individual when appointing candidates, but to consult a wider range of authoritative sources representing the full diversity of the faith communities.
- Some institutions may have access to a faith adviser who can assist with the recruitment process. Any such adviser should also seek to consult widely when considering individuals who have applied for posts.



## 4.9 Interview

A structured interview designed to discover all relevant information and assess the competences of the applicant is an efficient method of focusing on the match between job and candidate.

- All interviewers should be considered applicants equally on merit at each stage of the selection process.
- Selection should be based on relevant criteria applied consistently to all candidates without bias; a scoring system would aid discussion at the decision stage.
- Interviews should ideally be conducted by a panel that includes the head of chaplaincy, head of department/division and a recognised member of the faith community/endorsing authority/adviser.
- Allowing the candidate to demonstrate her/his skills in a practical situation e.g. a sermon, role-play or presentation, will help assess their ability to fulfil the role.

## 4.10 Final decision

- Using the panel's agreed structured scoring system will highlight the competences/skills of each candidate.
- Writing up notes immediately after the interview recording relevant answers and detail will aid the decision-making process and be useful in providing feedback to the candidate if requested.
- Deciding on the successful candidate and informing all applicants of the outcome as soon as possible after the interview will help enable the post to be filled in a time-efficient manner.

## 4.11 References and checking

Pre-appointment reference checking is very important in ensuring that candidates are right for the job. This can involve:

- verifying the qualifications listed by the applicant (being mindful that sometimes qualifications can be issued overseas or in a language other than English and that it may be helpful to get assistance from an adviser, professional chaplaincy association or local faith body)
- conducting relevant criminal records bureau (CRB) checks
- verifying references.



## 4.12 Confirmation of appointment

The appointment of the chaplain should be formally agreed by the relevant members of the management team and successful candidates sent an offer letter to confirm their appointment.

## 4.13 Beyond recruitment

Recruitment is the start of a longer process. Once job holders are in place, institutions will need to think about their training needs and opportunities for continuous professional development to ensure they are able to develop their professional capabilities and respond to the evolving needs of service users and institutions.

It will be important to think about evaluation and performance appraisal, for example opportunities for service users to provide feedback.

## 5 Further information

### Faith Matters

Further information on the development of this guidance is available on the Faith Matters website.

[www.faith-matters.org](http://www.faith-matters.org)

### Education Sector

National Council for Faith and Beliefs in Further Education

[www.fbfe.org.uk](http://www.fbfe.org.uk)

Association of Muslim Chaplains in Education (AMCEd)

[www.amced.org.uk](http://www.amced.org.uk)

Association of Colleges

[www.aoc.co.uk](http://www.aoc.co.uk)

Unite the Union

[www.unitetheunion.com](http://www.unitetheunion.com)

### Courts

Her Majesty's Court Service – Multi Faith Chaplaincy:

Support for Staff and Users in Court

[www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk/cms/files/multifaithchaplaincy.pdf#7](http://www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk/cms/files/multifaithchaplaincy.pdf#7)

### Prison Sector

Her Majesty's Prison Service

[www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk/careersandjobs/typeswork/chaplaincy/](http://www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk/careersandjobs/typeswork/chaplaincy/)

[www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk/adviceandsupport/prison-life/religion](http://www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk/adviceandsupport/prison-life/religion)

Muslim Chaplain's Association

[www.mca-hmps.co.uk](http://www.mca-hmps.co.uk)

### Armed Forces

Armed Forces Muslim Association

[www.afma.org.uk](http://www.afma.org.uk)

Royal Army Chaplains' Department

[www.army.mod.uk/chaplains/chaplains.aspx](http://www.army.mod.uk/chaplains/chaplains.aspx)

Royal Air Force Chaplains Branch

[www.raf.mod.uk/chaplains](http://www.raf.mod.uk/chaplains)

## **NHS**

College of Health Care Chaplains  
[www.healthcarechaplains.org](http://www.healthcarechaplains.org)

Association of Hospice and Palliative Care Chaplains (AHPCC)  
[www.ahpcc.org.uk](http://www.ahpcc.org.uk)

Multi-faith Group for Healthcare Chaplaincy  
[www.mfghc.com](http://www.mfghc.com)

Hospital Chaplaincies Council  
[www.nhs-chaplaincy-spiritualcare.org.uk](http://www.nhs-chaplaincy-spiritualcare.org.uk)

UK Board of Healthcare Chaplaincy  
[www.ukbhc.org.uk](http://www.ukbhc.org.uk)

## **Police Service**

National Association of Chaplains to Police  
[www.police-chaplains.org.uk](http://www.police-chaplains.org.uk)

National Association of Muslim Police  
[www.namp-uk.com](http://www.namp-uk.com)

## **Training Institutions for chaplains**

The Markfield Institute of Higher Education  
[www.mihe.org.uk](http://www.mihe.org.uk)

The Al-Khoei Benevolent Foundation  
[www.al.khoei.org](http://www.al.khoei.org)

Cardiff University  
[www.cardiff.ac.uk](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk)

St Mary's University College, Twickenham, London  
[www.smuc.ac.uk](http://www.smuc.ac.uk)

The United Synagogue  
[www.theus.org.uk](http://www.theus.org.uk)

Liberal Judaism  
[www.liberaljudaism.org](http://www.liberaljudaism.org)

## 6 Annex A – Highlighting Best Practice

### A.1 Breaking bad news and dealing with difficult circumstances – ‘a death on campus’

#### **Problem being addressed:**

A young Egyptian male student who was well known on the campus for being very athletic, as well as a boxing champion, collapsed and died following a football game with his friends. The student had a wife who was pregnant at the time of his death.

#### **Approach undertaken by the chaplain:**

The chaplain immediately provided support to the young widow whilst taking into account gender sensitivities. As the chaplain was male, he called his wife to come along and talk with the widow. He was therefore able to provide her with much needed pastoral care and spiritual support at her time of need. He also liaised immediately with the local mosque and the local Egyptian community so that they could support the young mother during this tragic time. The chaplain also took the initiative to contact the International Association of Egyptian Students who organised the body to be brought back to Egypt, where it was subsequently buried.

The friends of the young person who passed away were traumatised by the death of their friend. This happened during the holy month of Ramadan and just before the festival of Eid-ul-Fitr. The chaplain ensured that he utilised the Eid sermon or Khutbah to address the distress of fellow students who needed to hear and talk about this painful and dramatic incident on campus.

#### **Additional problem and lessons learnt:**

Often when a Muslim person dies overseas away from his country of origin, the family requests that his/her body be brought back to the home country for burial. However, the body must be embalmed prior to travelling. This practice raises numerous questions and is seen in a negative light by a majority of mainstream scholars. Ideally, the body should be washed and cleaned and left without any chemical additives.

The chaplain explained that the student's family in Egypt had been informed too late about the death to be able to make an informed decision as to whether the body should be buried before sunset on the day of death (as is required within Islam), or whether to have the body repatriated back to Egypt. However, as soon as the family was informed and they made the decision to have the body flown back, it was repatriated extremely quickly.

**Outcome:**

This example demonstrates how chaplains, in this case within a university, must deal with very challenging and difficult circumstances and how they can effectively provide support to vulnerable people at a time of need. It also shows the broader elements of a chaplain's role and how they must be able to communicate sensitively and effectively to the multiple groups affected in such difficult circumstances.

This example also shows that the role of a chaplain is not limited to issues on a campus. Familial links, (in this case overseas in the Middle East) and time constraints meant that the chaplain had to work with agencies overseas and in a fast and pro-active manner.

## **A.2 Awareness of local and national support groups and signposting services – 'a conversion on campus'**

**Problem being addressed:**

Whilst studying in England, a young Jamaican woman from a traditional Christian background decided that she wanted to convert to Islam. The chaplain organised the Shahadah (declaration of faith within Islam) in the prayer room of the university. When the chaplain asked how this would impact on relations with her family, she answered that she was very close to them and that her parents were very tolerant, so she anticipated that it would not be a problem for them in accepting her conversion. Unfortunately, the family which was based in Jamaica, took the conversion extremely badly.

The family shared the same bank account in which the student used to deposit her money. When her parents learnt of the conversion, they shut down access to the account and this left her penniless. She was left with just enough money for one week's rent for her accommodation and for a couple of day's worth of meals.

**Approach undertaken by the chaplain:**

The chaplain contacted the New Muslims Project, an organisation which assists new Muslims or converts to Islam within the UK. By chance, they had some additional money left in their funds and were able to provide the female student with £500. This was of great help to her as it allowed her time to find a job. As soon as she was able to do so, she repaid the sum of money so that it could help other people in the same situation. The chaplain continued to provide long term support to the young student as she had experienced a highly traumatic and emotional event which was effectively, a form of bereavement.

**Outcome:**

After this experience, the chaplain decided to develop an emergency fund that could help to support students in such desperate situations. The first set of donations into the emergency fund were made by students who welcomed the initiative. This case demonstrates how chaplains should be able to signpost students and be aware of community or voluntary sector organisations that may be able to assist vulnerable people through traumatic incidents.

### **A.3 Working within a multi-faith environment – 'working in partnership with other faith chaplains'**

**Problem being addressed:**

A student within a further education college wrote to an advocacy body for human rights which focussed on supporting Muslim communities. The student suggested that the college had actively restricted him from praying and that it had discriminated against him and his Islamic beliefs. The advocacy body subsequently wrote a stern letter to the college outlining that this discrimination was unacceptable. The college approached the Muslim chaplain to try to find a resolution to the matter.

The Muslim chaplain was away from the college at that point and only accessible by phone and therefore a resolution had to be found through a chaplain on-site. It was deemed that this take place through the Christian chaplain.

### **Approach undertaken by the chaplain:**

The Muslim chaplain asked the college authorities whether they had the facility to meet the Friday (Juma'a) service requirements for Muslim students.

The response from the college was that a Friday prayer facility was on offer. The Muslim chaplain advised the college to undertake some work to inform Muslim students about the Friday prayer facility in order to raise awareness and prevent further issues.

The Muslim chaplain decided to defuse the situation by getting some face-to-face intervention work undertaken through the Christian chaplain in the college. He provided the Christian chaplain with advice on working with the student and understanding his religious needs to help the chaplain do this effectively.

### **Outcome:**

The Christian chaplain located and met with the student in question. At the meeting, the Christian chaplain listened and talked to the student about the facilities for prayer for Muslim (and other) students that were available on-site. Since the Muslim chaplain had provided some background and context to the religious needs of Muslim students to the Christian chaplain, he had the confidence to work with the Muslim student and to resolve the issue.

The student was satisfied that there was the opportunity for him to pray on-site and to fulfil his religious obligations. The joint work of the Muslim and Christian chaplains had resolved what could have been a very difficult situation for the college and the possibility of reputational damage.

## **A.4 Treating others equally – 'talking about sensitive issues on campus'**

### **Problem bring addressed:**

An Islamic society on an university campus was preparing a speech for Friday prayers. Like other young people of faith, they wanted to learn about religious perspectives that sometimes tackled difficult questions and which would address the diversity of communities that there are within society. The topic they therefore wanted to address was homosexuality.



However, they were afraid of the potential negative reaction from the Pro-Vice Chancellor and the administration body of the university. They were particularly concerned that they could be seen as being extremist or intolerant in their views, leading to further misconceptions on all sides on campus.

The students therefore wanted to organise discussions on homosexuality without the religious perspectives being seen as homophobic. One organisation had recently been banned because of their homophobic propaganda and the Islamic society did not want to be regarded in the same way.

### **Approach undertaken by the chaplain:**

The chaplain thought it was important to organise such a discussion on this subject since it was relevant to society today and he was aware that Muslim students would have a lot of questions on this topic. At the same time, the chaplain wanted to ensure that non-discriminatory conversations took place. He personally took responsibility to speak about all of the difficult and sensitive issues and he ensured that this was done in the most open and transparent manner possible. Throughout this process, the chaplain ensured that the discussions were sensitive and did not infringe on the human rights of other students or those who identified themselves as being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transsexual.

### **Outcome:**

The university administration disseminated the chaplain's text on homosexuality to other members in the multi-faith chaplaincy team and throughout the university, as a speech from which others could learn when dealing with such sensitive issues. Taking this measure also ensured that there was transparency and trust building between groups of students on campus.

This case study illustrates how chaplains must address issues of relevance to young people and how, on occasions, they must assume the role of mediator in facilitating reflective discussions and ensuring that the space for freedom of speech is protected. This may be in relation to some difficult topics. However, this must be balanced with the chaplain's ability to be non-judgemental and non-discriminatory. In this case study, the chaplain undertook this role with these key elements at the heart of his interactions and work with students.

## A.5 Dealing with emergencies –‘saving the life of a woman and her baby in a hospital’

### **Problems being addressed:**

A Muslim woman attended the hospital to give birth. The family was very religious and the woman had previously been seen only by female consultants and doctors at her request for reasons concerned with *hiya* (modesty) and her honour and dignity.

At the time of delivery the decision was made for a Caesarean section since it was deemed that her life was in danger. However, there was only a male consultant available to perform surgery at that time. There was therefore problems in performing the surgery, since the family of the woman refused treatment from the male consultant, despite efforts from the medical team and midwives to persuade her and her family. As the situation continued, the patient was developing further complications.

The Trust therefore called for the chaplain to come and help find a resolution so that the patient could be treated quickly.

### **The approach undertaken by the chaplain:**

The chaplain explained to the woman and her family that at a time of emergency and personal danger, she could be seen by a male chaplain since Islam provided for dispensations to ensure that life is protected. He also used theological arguments to inform her family that Islam allows women to be seen by a male doctor when no female practitioner is available, especially when life is in danger.

### **Outcome:**

The pregnant woman finally agreed to be operated upon by a male doctor. This case shows that hospital chaplains have responsibilities towards the wellbeing of patients and their families and how they need to be capable of dealing with sensitive issues, such as gender issues and differences. In this case, the chaplain effectively used his counselling skills and religious knowledge to ensure that the life of the pregnant woman was not in jeopardy. This case also demonstrates how chaplains have to work under pressure in emergency situations. Without a quick intervention from the chaplain, the mother and child could have died.

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