

Becoming a Chaplaincy Champion

In the Somerset Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

Being a Chaplaincy Champion doesn't mean that you are the next Martin Luther King about to deliver a stirring speech to expectant crowds, or a budding Mahatma Ghandi bringing peaceful transformation to society. It doesn't even mean that you are a particularly religious person or committed to a specific faith or denomination. And let's be honest, it can't mean that you have spare time on your ward, because nobody has; we understand that.

But it does mean that you've seen what it means for a patient, or a carer, or even a colleague to be struggling with some of life's deepest questions. All around us people might be hearing a difficult diagnosis or assessment and many will be asking 'why did this happen to me?' or 'how can I go back to my life when it will never be the same again?' In those moments chaplaincy and spiritual care can make a real difference as chaplains have significant time to listen and to accompany people on life's very toughest pages, not simply offering a short prayer or a religious action. As a Chaplaincy Champion you will be able to connect people to the Sompar Chaplaincy team and to the provision of that spiritual care.



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So, if your line manager gave you the OK, what would the role of a Chaplaincy Champion look like? There are three main areas to think about:

1. *Understanding Spiritual Care*

We would want to help you understand what spiritual care is, and indeed what spiritual pain is, and what it is that is happening when a Chaplain or a Chaplaincy volunteer is spending time with a patient. It's actually not just the big God conversations or mindless small talk about the weather – more tea vicar! We would want you to know how a Chaplain pays attention to a patient's questions, their story, their beliefs, maybe their anger or despair, and when appropriate offers religious care in accordance with the patient's faith and religious community.

We would like to invite you to meet occasionally with other Chaplaincy Champions to deepen your own knowledge and to be inspired by their work practices.

2. *Making Referrals to Chaplaincy*

As a *Chaplaincy Champion* we'll give you some simple instructions on how to make a referral to our small department. We're not asking you to take on the spiritual care of every patient you meet, but potentially to have that initial conversation which opens up the possibility of spiritual care. There will be patients or staff who you sense would really benefit from support from Chaplaincy and your referral can help us make a difference at a critical time. You can help us as we inform your colleagues about this process and perhaps assist with teaching in this area.

3. *Encouraging an Ethos of Spiritual Care*

Working in the NHS we are all aware that we don't work alone, but on thousands and thousands of teams in the middle of a giant, and quite wonderful, organisation. We would hope that a *Chaplaincy Champion* can connect with their own team in a way that encourages an understanding of spiritual care across the team, builds a network for referrals, and allows an ethos of person-centred spiritual care across our trust.

We hope that a Chaplaincy Champion would become a natural link with their ward, unit or department, especially when it comes to organising events and religious services. You won't be asked to dress up as the Easter Bunny, honest, but you would be invited to the Creative Celebrations Group which meets to discuss which festivals will be marked and in which manner.

In time you might become a natural person to help us inform your colleagues about cultural and religious diversity, and we'd really value your input and suggestions as we develop the role and chaplaincy over the next couple of years.

We hope that you're inspired by this suggestion and might join the team. Please get in touch with us when you can.

Contact us:

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