

Ref: Parishes, Chaplaincies and Hospitals: guidance on working together in coming weeks.

Dear all,

I am forwarding this information in my capacity as Bishop's Adviser for Healthcare Chaplaincy. I hope it is helpful to those support parishioners who find themselves in hospital in the coming weeks.

Our Chaplaincy Teams are now working almost entirely without voluntary support, and several members of our teams are in high-risk groups and are required to self-isolate and work from home. As you might imagine, this is creating significant pressure and demanding quite a lot of creativity on our part as we seek to maintain support patients, families and staff. Much of our service is becoming telephone-based, and we are expecting a significant increase in our staff support role. The challenge is just as great for our colleagues supporting mental health services.

There are some important ways in which clergy, readers and all those responsible for pastoral visiting can support us in this work to support patients and staff.

1. All Devon hospital sites are now limiting all visits to the absolute minimum within set periods of the day (see website). Most are limiting to one person at any one time. Rules are even more strict if a patient is believed to be Covid 19 positive. It may seem obvious, but these apply to ministers as well; please do not seek to breach these guidelines or visit outside of the advertised hours without a clear agreement from the hospital.
2. With reduced contact and self isolation becoming the 'new normal'- messages of support become increasingly vital. Do feel free to let the relevant Chaplaincy Team know of a parishioner in hospital- but when you do so, please make it very clear what you know of the situation so we can assess the significance and urgency of need. Teams will need to limit face to face support to the most critical situations, but our hope will always to be able to pass on thoughts and prayers to all patients on your behalf, even if this has to go indirectly through nursing colleagues. Such messages are still vital- and work better coming via Chaplaincy rather than calling the ward direct.
3. If you are made aware of an urgent situation, such as a parishioner requiring spiritual support around end of life, then please consider liaising with one of the Chaplains before seeking to come in. There is a high chance that the ward will not fully understand your reason for wishing to visit and may refuse access given the current situation. If you feel a visit is of great significance and it is safe for you to come in, please speak to one of the Chaplains (of any faith or denomination) before coming so we can agree a plan and liaise with the relevant ward/unit. This will always depend on the situation the ward finds itself in on the day.
4. If you are aware of NHS staff within your parishes, please do pay particular attention to their support and their needs. It is likely that many will become involved in situations that are challenging beyond our recent experience, and the knowledge of your prayer and support will be vital.

Finally on behalf of all my colleagues in the NHS, particularly those working in chaplaincy teams here in Devon, may I thank you for your support and ask for your prayers. We are working alongside clinical and administration colleagues who are putting the concerns of their families and their own anxieties to one side as they prepare for what will be a very long and difficult spring and summer.

Every blessing,



Dr. Simon Harrison TSSF

Information about Simon's role. Simon is the Bishop's Advisor for Healthcare chaplaincy. His paid role is as Lead Chaplain to the Royal Devon and Exeter, and he has worked as a Chaplain in Devon for about 20 years, under Bishop's licence. He also has a national role as President of the College of Health Care Chaplains (the main professional body), and sits on the regulatory body (UKBHC). In terms of personal spirituality, he has been a professed Tertiary in the Anglican Franciscans for many years. As someone with MS, he is one of the Chaplains currently working creatively from home.

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