

**ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY**

**RESEARCH PROPOSAL**

**CHAPLAINCY IN COMMUNITY CONTEXTS:  
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHAPLAINCY FOR THE MISSION AND  
MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH IN ENGLAND**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **CHAPLAINCY IN COMMUNITY CONTEXTS: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHAPLAINCY FOR THE MISSION AND MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH IN ENGLAND**

#### **A RESEARCH PROPOSAL**

by

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This paper describes the writer's involvement in and commitment to the practice and teaching of chaplaincy in previous professional settings of Healthcare and Social Responsibility and how her current role as Research Officer at The Oxford Centre for Ecclesiology and Practical Theology (OxCEPT) has enabled her to develop knowledge and understanding of chaplaincy through engagement in further research. It sets out the early stages of the research including a scoping survey which indicated the need for further research and led to the decision to do the work as part of the Professional Doctorate in Practical Theology (PrD) at Anglia Ruskin University. The paper describes how an initial literature review led to the articulation of the central research question: *What is the significance of chaplaincy as a form of ministry for the mission and ministry of the church in England?* The paper locates chaplaincy within the wider context of practical theology before going on to locate the rationale for the research in the contemporary cultural shift away from institutional belonging requiring the church to reach out beyond the territorial parochial paradigm of ministry in order to engage with people in the varied contexts of their lives. In this context, Chaplaincy is described as a key paradigm of engagement at the heart of the mission of the whole church. Having located chaplaincy within the mission of the church, the paper proceeds: to set out the qualitative, interpretative methodology; to consider the resource demands and implications of the research and the research skills required. In conclusion, the paper considers the possible contribution that the proposed research might make to the development of praxis and to chaplaincy as a field of study.

## **1. The origins of the research process: personal professional context**

My interest and involvement in chaplaincy practice began in 1985 with a summer placement working in a hospital chaplaincy prior to entering ordination training. This demanding context of faithful attention to and engagement with the lived experience of people's lives made sense to me of what I was beginning to discern of my vocation. After experience of different forms of chaplaincy in the course of ministerial training, I began my first job as a hospital chaplain in 1989 and I have been deeply involved with chaplaincy in different contexts ever since: as a practitioner, an educator, a consultant and a contributor to policy development in healthcare contexts. From the start, I had a deeply held conviction of the importance of chaplaincy not only to the health and wellbeing of the individuals and communities it served but also to the institutional church as a way of enabling it to live out its vocation to serve the mission of God in the world. My involvement with chaplaincy during the past quarter century has done nothing to diminish this conviction, a conviction that inspires and animates my research.

After fifteen years spent working as a hospital and hospice chaplain, I spent two years working for the Oxford Diocesan Board for Social Responsibility. This broadened my involvement with chaplaincy work in contexts such as Young Offender Institutions, courts, town centres and care homes. As I became increasingly aware of the extensive social reach of chaplaincy engagement, I also became aware of the absence of any coherent articulation of what chaplaincy actually *is* and questions began to emerge: What is chaplaincy *for* in any given context? What is its integrity as a form of ministry? What is its relationship with the institutional church?

These questions were insistent and would not go away. When I began work as Research Officer for OxCEPT in 2008 my remit was to develop the work on chaplaincy. Through my involvement in different networks and discussions with colleagues involved in chaplaincy of all kinds, it became clear that the question that needed to be addressed was: Why has there been the recent growth in chaplaincy work and what might its significance be

for the mission and ministry of the church? Clearly, there was a need for empirical research in this area.

## **2. Finding focus for the research: first stages of the research process**

### ***2.1 Scoping Survey***

In order to begin to address the above question, in 2009 I undertook an indicative scoping survey of Christian chaplaincy in community contexts (Slater, 2009). Qualitative data was collected through a variety of methods including semi-structured interviews, web based research, workplace visits and attendance at chaplaincy related conferences. Analysis of the data resulted in the emergence of six main themes which began to focus the research. The themes are here presented as six main questions that underpin the initial inquiry:

1. What is the significance of a renewed growth and interest in chaplaincy from the contexts of chaplaincy, the academy and church institutions?
2. What is the theological rationale of the practice?
3. What is the integrity of chaplaincy as a form of ministry? Is it different from parish or congregational ministry, and if so, in what ways?
4. What is the relationship between chaplaincy and the institutional church?
5. What structures of training, support and accountability are required for effective chaplaincy work?
6. Why do many chaplains feel that their work is not valued by the church in the same way as parish or congregational ministry?

Clearly, the reflections and concerns voiced by chaplains that underlie these questions covered a wide range of issues including the practical and professional, theological, missiological, ecclesiological, cultural and sociological implications of chaplaincy.

## **2.2 Literature Review**

One of the constant challenges in researching chaplaincy in community contexts is that because the contexts and models of working are so varied, it is hard to discern and articulate what can be said generically about the practice and its significance. The temptation for those who write about chaplaincy is to recount compelling stories of practice in specific contexts without bringing them into dialogue with any wider frame of reference that may help to illuminate practice and move forward the conversation between chaplaincy and the institutional church. In order to try to locate the research within a broader frame of reference, I undertook a literature review.

It soon became clear that there is little or no literature relating to the theological, ecclesiological or cultural significance of the current re-emergence of interest in chaplaincy in community contexts. There are only two texts that deal explicitly with the varied contexts of chaplaincy engagement: Legood's, *Chaplaincy: The Church's Sector Ministries* (Legood, 1999) ground-breaking in its time but published over a decade ago, and the recent *Being a Chaplain* (Threlfall-Holmes and Newitt, 2011) which does not explore in any depth the significance of Christian chaplaincy within contemporary understandings of the mission of the whole church.

Paul Ballard's article, *Locating Chaplaincy: A Theological Note* (Ballard, 2009) stands more or less alone in suggesting that if chaplaincy is of growing importance, as he believes it is, then it needs to establish a normative status within ministerial discourse and to be firmly grounded both theologically and structurally. Ballard points out that chaplaincy has often been labelled as 'sector ministry' implying that it addresses a narrow facet of society in contrast to the normative ministry of the parish or congregation. However, it is argued, since society has become 'sectorised' and we all move constantly between different roles and sectors, chaplaincy is now in a prime position to express the relevance of the gospel in every area of life. Embedded within the social structures of society, Ballard argues that chaplaincy now finds itself located within contemporary models of mission. The literature review led to consideration of the major areas relevant to the understanding and location

of chaplaincy. This included Missiology, particularly the *missio Dei* theology of Bosch (Bosch, 1992) and Spencer (Spencer, 2007), Ministry, Pastoral Care, contemporary spirituality and the culturally engaged ecclesiology of Percy exemplified in *Engaging with Contemporary Culture: Christian Theology and the Concrete Church* (Percy, 2005).

The literature review supported the characterisation of chaplaincy as a frontier ministry, focused in social rather than ecclesiastical structures and engaged with people's everyday lived experience. In the contemporary plural cultural context, chaplaincy often seems able to engage in the public square with those whom, for a variety of reasons, parish and congregational ministers may find it increasingly difficult to reach. As such, it can be seen as standing at the forefront of the church's participation in the Mission of God in the world. The review had served to clarify what might be the main focus of the research: the contemporary significance of chaplaincy for the mission and ministry of the church in England.

### **3. Locating the research within the context of Practical Theology**

Situated within the social structures of society and standing at the interface between the church and contemporary culture, chaplaincy by nature is involved in a critical dialectical relationship with context focusing on *praxis*. Research into chaplaincy is therefore ideally located within the discipline of Practical Theology the primary concern of which is *praxis*. David Tracy distinguishes practical from fundamental and systematic theologies in that:

‘They will assume praxis as the proper criterion for the meaningful truth of theology, praxis here understood as practice informed by and informing, often transforming, all prior theory in relationship to the legitimate and self-involving concerns of a particular cultural , political, social or pastoral need having genuine religious import.’

(Tracy, 1981, p.57)



In Practical Theology, the knowledge and theory generated by attending to practice aims to make a difference by contributing not only to the academy, but primarily to the transformation of practice. Miller-McLemore speaks of the contributions of practical theology in the forthcoming *Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology* saying: 'Disciplinary expertise is always highly valued. But its ultimate aim lies beyond disciplinary concerns in the pursuit of an embodied Christian faith.' (Miller-McLemore, 2011, p.5).

Elsewhere, she characterises pastoral and practical theologies as 'theologies caught in the act of people's lives' (Miller-McLemore, 2010, p.820). This nicely captures the commitment of both practical theology and chaplaincy to paying attention to the everyday realities of life in a given context, accounting experience a valid and valuable theological source. Because the practice of chaplaincy is not undertaken from within the relative safety of the gathered Christian community but *alongside* people of all faiths and none in the varied contexts of everyday life, practical theology is the appropriate context within which to locate this research. The study of chaplaincy and practical theology both concern: 'how theological activity can inform and be informed by practical action in the interests of making an appropriate, effective Christian response in the modern world.' (Woodward and Pattison, 2000, p.2).

#### **4. The rationale for the research**

As the early stages of the research developed the emergent questions began to require attention through empirical research and a practical theological approach. Dr Helen Cameron, the Director of OxCEPT at the time, suggested that the research could be fruitfully developed as part of the professional doctorate programme at Anglia Ruskin University and I registered for the PrD in 2009/10. OxCEPT is based at an Anglican theological training college, Ripon College Cuddesdon, and I am employed by Ripon College. Because the research is sponsored by my employer, I also convened an advisory work reference group to provide expertise and experience in areas relevant to the research. The reference group comprises: the Director of OxCEPT; an academic staff member who teaches

missiology; the Anglican National Advisor for Rural Affairs; the Director of The Bloxham Project educational charity who is currently undertaking research into schools chaplaincy; and a bishop with significant involvement in chaplaincy matters. The aim of the group is to provide a variety of informed perspectives on the work in order to aid its development and eventual dissemination. The rationale for the research was initially presented to the reference group.

I explained in the introduction that the motivation for this research is rooted in my own personal professional involvement in and commitment to chaplaincy as a form of ministry and way of being church. However, the rationale for undertaking the research at this point in time is rooted in the ecclesiological challenges posed by contemporary culture. With the postmodern cultural shift away from institutional belonging first explored by Davie (Davie, 1994) and more recently by Heelas and Woodhead (Heelas and Woodhead, 2005), it can be argued that an urgent task for the church is to find ways of reaching out beyond the traditional parochial territorial paradigm of ministry to engage with people in the varied contexts of their lives. Seen in the context of the decline in congregational numbers, the recent growth and interest in chaplaincy as a form of ministry exposes the need to research the relationship of chaplaincy with the contemporary cultural and ecclesial context in order to begin to articulate its significance both for practice and for the mission and ministry of the church.

The background to this cultural challenge to the church is the secularisation debate and the rise to prominence of spirituality as a key social concept and mode of discourse within social and cultural institutions. This phenomenon has been analysed in an empirical study of religious involvement in Kendal UK and in the USA. *The Spiritual Revolution: why religion is giving way to spirituality* (Heelas and Woodhead, 2005) tests the hypothesis that in our society there is a general trend characterised as a turn away from religion to spirituality. The research suggests that traditional forms of religious association are giving way to and being influenced by new forms of spirituality and that engagement with personal experience is a key

component of spiritualities and churches that are thriving. Heelas and Woodhead argue that this mirrors the general 'subjectivisation' of contemporary culture within which conformity to external obligations or dogma is seen as less important than the authority of personal experience and inner wellbeing. This has left the churches with the pressing task of needing to discern how to fulfil their mission in the world in this cultural context. As Percy points out: 'most ecclesial communities in late modernity are beginning to discover afresh that they are increasingly reacting to and evolving with the environments in which they find themselves rather than shaping them from some position of inherited privilege.' (Percy, 2006, p.105). In a plural society where institutional belonging has become a matter of individual choice, how is the church to engage with people who are closed to institutional belonging but nevertheless open to 'God' and the transcendent dimension of life in order to serve the mission of God in the world? I would argue that this is precisely the point at which chaplaincy has a key role to play: embedded in social rather than ecclesiastical structures, chaplains are ideally placed to engage with people in the varied contexts of everyday life.

The Church of England report *Mission Shaped Church: Church planting and fresh expressions of church in a changing context* (Archbishop's Council, 2004) and the subsequent development of the idea of a 'mixed economy' (Bayes and Jordan, 2010) of traditional and new forms of ministry reflect the recognition that the church needs to adapt to this changing cultural context in order to fulfil its mission. However, neither the report nor subsequent discussions about the future of ministry mention chaplaincy. Given the ubiquity and social reach of chaplaincy, this seems to be a startling omission. It prompts the question: why is the voice of chaplaincy so rarely heard within the discourse of the institutional church?

I think it is a significant fact that The Church of England currently gathers no statistics about chaplaincy in community contexts even though a significant percentage of its clergy are involved in such work. The findings of my scoping survey (Slater, 2009) and the literature already alluded to reveal the tension between chaplaincy and the institutional church as of central

significance. In interviews, chaplains frequently mentioned feeling that their work was not valued by the church in the same way as parish ministry. In his research on hospital chaplaincy, Swift tellingly refers to the situation as: 'The silent exile of the chaplains from the central preoccupations of the church.' (Swift, 2009, p.173). This situation not only has implications for the mission of the church but also for the development and resourcing of chaplaincy. My chaplaincy experience and the preliminary research suggests that in order for chaplaincy to find its voice, there is a need to describe its significance in the contemporary ecclesiastical and cultural context and in so doing to articulate the integrity of chaplaincy within the mission and ministry of the church as a basis for the development and possible transformation of practice.

The rationale for the research therefore has two dimensions: my own personal and professional involvement in and commitment to chaplaincy as a form of ministry able to serve individuals and communities in every area of life and the deeply held conviction, born out of experience and research, that chaplaincy has an important role to play in enabling the church to fulfil its mission in the world in this particular time and place and in the particular cultural context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **5. Research Methodology**

### ***5.1 Hermeneutical phenomenology***

In the preliminary research outlined above, I have undertaken a literature search using conventional library data base search methods and internet web searches using Google. In the scoping survey I used qualitative methods focusing on semi-structured interviews supplemented by participant observation during work place visits and the gathering of information via web searches and attendance at conferences. The interviews were partly transcribed and then analysed using the constant comparative method (Thomas, 2011, p.171) in order to interpret the data and elicit themes that would inform the main research. These themes are the basis of the questions set out at section 2.1. This hermeneutical phenomenological method was chosen because my starting point for enquiry was the lived

experience of chaplains. Building on Swinton and Mowat's contention in *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* that: 'Qualitative research seeks to create deep and rich insights into the meanings that people place on particular forms of experience.' (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.63), my aim was to determine what chaplains' experience meant to them and to build up a rich description of it before bringing to it 'a necessary interpretative perspective.' (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.109). This interpretative approach to inquiry is central to Practical Theology which, according to Swinton and Mowat: 'should be understood as that aspect of the theological enterprise that focuses on the interpretation of the practices of church and world as an ongoing source of theological interpretation and understanding' (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.11) as well as aiming to transform practice. In this way, practice and theory can be held together with integrity.

I collected a substantial amount of rich data during the scoping survey which led me to conclude that further research was needed; I had then to decide what form the next stage of the research should take. My decision to undertake Case Study research was informed by two difficulties encountered in the study of chaplaincy in this field:

1. The diversity of context and models of chaplaincy practice mean that it is hard to find a focus of enquiry: on what basis might one select participants when every chaplaincy looks different according to context?
2. The related temptation, mentioned above, to gather accounts of diverse practice without taking the necessary step of interpretative analysis in order to inform both theory and future practice.

I will argue that case study research is the best way to deal with both these difficulties.

## **5.2 Case Study research**

The proposed research will meet the first difficulty by selecting three geographically defined case studies providing a cross section of ministerial contexts within which chaplaincy roles have developed. The contexts are rural, a semi-urban market town and an urban town centre. The methods used will include semi-structured interviews, attendance at team meetings,

and the collection of relevant information in the public domain. Because this project is part of my work as a Research Officer, as I write this I have already received ethical approval for the project from Anglia Ruskin University and have begun the data collection. I have appended an interview schedule for Chaplains (Appendix A) and one for Team Leaders (Appendix B). These will be used as a guide to ensure that the areas of interest to the inquiry are covered in every interview. Using work networks that have provided me with wide access to people in ministry, I have selected three contexts that fit the above criteria and which are within reasonable travelling distance from Oxford. The first case study in a rural context was undertaken as a pilot study in Spring 2011 and has been written up as Paper 2 of the PrD. This was presented as a short paper at the British and Irish Association of Practical Theology Conference in July 2011. Throughout the research journey I have found it valuable to present my work whenever possible so that feedback from colleagues and peers can inform the process.

The proposed research will meet the second difficulty of work in this field in that case studies enable one to elicit thick descriptions of the complexities of the practice and context of chaplaincy which will then be available for analysis and interpretation. Whilst case studies do not in themselves provide generalisable knowledge, they do enable an in depth look at what is happening and why in a given context; they enable the research to capture processes and relationships as well as to provide descriptions of practice. This data can then resonate with and be interpreted by others in the context of their own experience. Thomas argues that: 'The case study thus offers you an example from which your experience, your phronesis, enables you to gather insights or understand a problem.' (Thomas, 2011, p.215). Not generalisable then but generative of insight and understanding in relation to practice. I argue that this practical knowledge is a good basis from which to further understanding of chaplaincy practice and that it could contribute to a knowledge base from which, potentially, chaplaincy could begin to find a voice within the institutional church.

### ***5.3 Methods used within the case studies***

The main methods used within the case studies comprise: semi-structured interviews, participant observation and documentary analysis. The intention is that the use of a variety of methods will provide triangulation for the data and the multiple perspectives appropriate to the complex contexts involved. In terms of the interviews, I am aware of the problems associated with interviewing key informants and that those in this position may present the work in a particular way. However, I hope that the breadth of interviews and the data collected by other methods will enable the data to represent a rich description of the cases. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed and sent to participants to be checked. Although I have set out interview schedules (Cf. Appendices A and B) to ensure that the main areas of interest are considered, participants are given scope within the interview to explore the issues in their own way and to share their own insights. At the end of the interview they are given the opportunity to add anything further that they wish to say about chaplaincy. In this way, I hope that the interviews can address the core concerns of the research whilst enabling individual chaplains and team members to give voice to their particular experience and insight. As with the preliminary scoping survey, the data will be analysed using the constant comparative method in order to elicit the emerging themes.

### ***5.4 Timeframe for the research***

The data for the pilot rural case study has been collected, analysed and written up as a paper. Because I have designated time for doing the research within my professional role I anticipate that the data for the two main case studies will be collected and transcribed by January 2012. I will then analyse the data and seek opportunities to disseminate interim findings thus gaining further feedback before writing up the project with a view to completing my dissertation by September 2013.

## **6. Resourcing the project**

Financially, the research is being sponsored by my employer as part of the development of work in the field of chaplaincy. The fact that I am based within one of the leading Anglican theological colleges means that I am privileged to have access not only to library resources but also to invaluable church networks which have enabled me to find and access appropriate case study contexts. I am enormously grateful for this. I have also been able to attend and present papers at the annual conference of the British and Irish Association of Practical Theology (BIAPT) which I have found to be a valuable forum for the sharing of ideas and for gaining feedback on work from peers. The reference group also provides a forum at which ideas can be discussed and challenged and the insights of broader national perspectives brought to bear on the research. It is immensely valuable to have the perspectives of people working with chaplains nationally and the perspective of someone within the hierarchy of the institutional church. I anticipate that this group will be able to offer advice in future decisions about dissemination. The other major resource is the Professional Doctorate programme itself. The supervision, seminar days and workshops have provided a community of learning which has enabled me to grow in confidence as a doctoral researcher through the past year.

### ***6.1 Research skills and the development of the researcher***

As the instrument of the research, the process thus far has been a developmental journey. I recognise that significant contributions to my development as a researcher have been made through reading and attending Anglia Ruskin University cross faculty training on qualitative research. It was valuable to be able to attend an intensive training course in research methods at Ripon College Cuddesdon in 2009 and to attend an Anglia Ruskin training day on how to communicate your research which helped to raise my awareness of appropriate ways in which to address different audiences for the research. I have learnt a great deal by taking opportunities to present work at conferences and training days. This experience has helped me to hone my presentation skills and to develop my



own style of presenting. My professional context has meant that I have also been fortunate to have had exposure to different approaches to research, such as Theological Action Research, through the work of colleagues and I have been able to use transferable skills from my professional experience such as listening, project and time management and writing. The keeping of a reflective research journal has provided a place where I have been able to capture random thoughts, wrestle with questions and difficulties, set down ideas sparked by what I have read and record landmarks along the way such as the submission of papers and getting under way with new stages of the research. Looking back on this, I am able to see how my confidence with the research has grown as my thinking has developed and concepts have emerged to provide direction for the work. I am also aware that this development has been facilitated by the formal structure of the PrD as the early papers such as the literature review provide in themselves a resource on which to build as the research develops. As I work with the data over the next two years I look forward to further developing my skills in research analysis.

## **7. The academic and policy significance of the research**

Before I suggest the potential contribution that this research might make I want to set out its delimitations. This is a small piece of research, a drop in the ocean in relation to the scope of chaplaincy, but nevertheless I contend that it is a valid first step in researching this unresearched area of ministerial practice. The fact that it is case study research provides rich, in depth reliable data that can help understanding of how and why things are as they are but which is generative of further questions and avenues of research: I would argue that this is a real strength. Because I need to find a focus for the work within this plural and diverse field, I propose to study Christian ministerial practice in England rather than multi-faith practice and to undertake qualitative rather than quantitative enquiry. However, I am aware that this study may reveal the need for further quantitative research.

Having acknowledged the delimitations of the research, I think that it will have a contribution to make in three areas. First, the research will add significantly to the current knowledge of and understanding of chaplaincy in community contexts. As far as I am aware, no empirical research has as yet been undertaken into the nature of chaplaincy and its significance in particular ministerial settings. I see the presentation of conference papers at the BIAPT and the Anglican Faith in Research conferences as part of this contribution as well as contributing to the development of chaplaincy as a field of study and a community of practice. As Mark Newitt remarks in *Being a Chaplain*, 'it would clearly be advantageous for there to be a greater collective understanding of role and purpose,' (Threlfall-Holmes and Newitt, 2011, p.113). The preliminary research has already provided a platform that enabled me to convene a Special Interest Group in chaplaincy at the 2011 BIAPT conference. The hope is that this will develop into a forum where conversations can be shared across the different contexts of engagement in order to develop thinking and contribute to understandings of practice. Part of this will be to develop an interactive page for chaplaincy on the BIAPT website.

The community focus of this work could complement the work with a more institutional focus that is undertaken by The Cardiff Centre for Chaplaincy Studies. Initially however, I think the research could provide the basis for a much needed publication providing a theologically and ecclesologically grounded account of chaplaincy practice and which makes the case for its importance both strategically and within the mission and ministry of the whole church.

Second, I believe the research has the potential to make a contribution to policy in terms of the strategic resourcing of this ministry. In the rationale for the research I argued that the Church of England and other Christian denominations are needing to think strategically about how to engage with the majority of the population who have no connection with the institutional church. Chaplaincy is a form of ministry that is ideally placed to do that. However, for a variety of reasons at present, chaplaincy does not have a

strong profile within the main institutional narratives about ministry. One of the difficulties in representing chaplaincy to policy makers, certainly in the Church of England, is the diversity of practice which can be read as incoherence and the lack of any quantitative data about chaplaincy. There are some statistics for chaplains employed by institutions such as hospitals, prisons and the Armed Forces but none are collected for chaplains working in community contexts. As a consequence, strategic thinking about this type of chaplaincy and the resources it may require is lacking. If this research can begin to describe the integrity and importance of chaplaincy it may contribute to raising its profile within the institution. Although this is not quantitative research, it is possible that it may open the doorway for this to take place. A further stage of the research could be the undertaking of an audit of chaplaincy provision within a particular diocese so that a picture of activity, deployment and the resources used could be built up in order to inform strategy.

Finally, in terms in practice, I have already mentioned the convening of a BIAPT Special Interest Group that I hope will be a democratic place where people can reflect together on practice. I hope to present aspects of my work in progress at the Faith in Research conference in London in May 2012 and to offer a workshop or seminar on chaplaincy during 2012.

In terms of the research itself, feedback from participants has indicated that taking part in the reflective interviews has been valued as an all too rare opportunity for people to reflect on their own practice. In contexts where people are often so busy doing that they find it hard to take time to reflect, any such opportunity is a contribution to practice. This raises two important issues for practice to which the research may be able to contribute in the future: the development of a consultancy model to enable ministry teams to develop and resource effective chaplaincy engagement and the provision of pastoral supervision for chaplains providing opportunity for individuals and groups to reflect on and so to develop and transform practice.

I believe that there is a third strand of work that may emerge from this research which, if pursued, could make a significant contribution to practice: the provision of training. This is speculative at present and would need careful thought in terms of the training level, target constituency and resourcing. At present, there are quite a number of accredited courses on chaplaincy from certificate to doctoral level but I am not aware of any training available to people who wish to develop the basic skills, theological awareness, competencies and qualities necessary for good chaplaincy work. The basis for such a course would be an explication of the necessary skills and knowledge required of chaplains that emerges from the current research.

## **8. Why the research matters to the world of practice**

I began this paper by declaring my own conviction of the importance and integrity of chaplaincy as a form of ministry. The fact that there is hardly any literature, no qualitative or quantitative research and no statistics on chaplaincy in community contexts is remarkable considering how widespread the practice is. Whilst this remains the case, this important work will remain hidden and unable to develop a profile within the institution. I am convinced that chaplaincy has a key role to play in the mission and ministry of the church as chaplains come alongside people in every area of daily life. Finding ways in which to engage with integrity with contemporary culture is now a priority for the church in this country and chaplaincy is one way in which this happens. The research hopes to raise the profile of chaplaincy as an important strategic resource within the church. It matters to the church.

However, whilst chaplaincy is a resource, it also needs appropriate resourcing: whilst it remains hidden and without an explicit theological and ecclesiological rationale, it is unlikely that the institution will value and resource this ministry. This work needs to be done so that conversations with the institution can open up and the value of chaplaincy be recognised. Many chaplains that I have spoken to have not felt valued by the church in their work and chaplaincy posts have been vulnerable to cuts in the face of financial stringency. If chaplaincy is understood in relation to the mission and

strategy of the church it is more likely to be valued; if chaplaincy is valued, chaplains are more likely to find the resources and support that they need in order to develop their practice and to be effective in their work. This is true not only for individual chaplains but for ministry teams. At a time when parishes are being amalgamated and clergy are increasingly under pressure, the development of chaplaincy roles may be of significant missional and strategic importance. Research might help people to understand how chaplaincy might work in their own context: it matters to individual practitioners and to teams.

It also matters that the profile of chaplaincy is raised and the practice developed with seriousness because there are many people who do not wish to belong to an institutional church but who nevertheless seek help to find hope, purpose and meaning in their daily lives, particularly at times of stress, transition, hardship and tragedy. In such circumstances, it is often chaplains who have the skills, in David Heywood's words, to offer: 'A shared humanity, vulnerability, a willingness to share the struggle, to explore the meaning of the mundane activities through which social life is maintained, perhaps to offer the hope of a better world.' (Heywood, 2011, p.14). This is skilled work: it matters to those whom the church exists to serve.

## **9. Conclusion**

In this research proposal I hope to have embodied the approach of the professional doctorate. Tracing the origins of the research to my own involvement in and reflection on chaplaincy practice, I have tried to give a reflexive account of the development of the research question and of myself as a researcher through the first stages of the research process to the proposal to take a case study approach. I have given an account of the rationale for the research, what I think it can contribute to knowledge, policy and practice and why I think it matters. I think that the research can be accomplished within the resources and time frame available. I believe that chaplaincy has a key missional and strategic role to play in the contemporary life of the church. The aim of the research is to present an analysis of data

that can form the basis for describing the integrity of chaplaincy as a form of ministry and its significance for the mission and ministry of the church. I hope that this may eventually feed into both the conversation and understandings between chaplaincy and the institutional church and, of course, back into practice.

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## APPENDIX A

### Interview Schedule: Chaplains and team members

**Research Question:** What is the significance for the mission and ministry of the church in England of the recent growth in forms of chaplaincy in community contexts?

#### *Context*

Please describe to me the context of your work. How is your chaplaincy role part of that context?

Has there always been a chaplaincy role here or is that something that has emerged or been developed by you?

Tell me how the chaplaincy role has emerged or been developed.

#### *Content*

How is the chaplaincy role set up? Are there any formal or informal agreements? Is it voluntary or paid?

What are the main components of your role as a chaplain?

What is most important to you about chaplaincy?

What are the challenges that chaplaincy presents?

Tell me about how you do/practice chaplaincy: What is your approach?

In what ways does the context of the work influence how you practice?

Have you had any training for or opportunity to reflect upon your work as a chaplain?

What resources are required to sustain and develop the work? Do you feel that the resources you need are available?

#### *Chaplaincy and parish ministry*

What led you to take on/develop the chaplaincy role?

How do you understand what you are doing? What theological thinking underpins your chaplaincy work?

What do you see as the purpose or aim of your chaplaincy work?

In what ways, if any, does your chaplaincy work relate to the work of the parish?

Do you understand your chaplaincy work in relation to the mission of the church? If so, how?

#### *The distinctiveness of chaplaincy*

For you, what (if anything) is distinctive about being a chaplain?

What/does chaplaincy enable you to do or be that is different to parish ministry?

What do you think is important about chaplaincy as a form of ministry?

Anything else?

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Interview Schedule: Team Leaders**

**Research Question:** What is the significance for the mission and ministry of the church in England of the recent growth in forms of chaplaincy in community contexts?

#### *Context*

Please describe to me the context of your work. How do you see chaplaincy as part of that context?

What part, if any, do the chaplaincy posts play in the overall strategy of the team?

How did the chaplaincy roles develop or emerge as part of the ministry of the team?

#### *The distinctiveness of chaplaincy*

What, to you, is distinctive about chaplaincy? What characterises chaplaincy?

What does a chaplaincy role enable someone to do or to be that is different to parish ministry?

How is chaplaincy different to parish ministry?

What do you think is important about chaplaincy as a form of ministry?

#### *Chaplaincy and parish ministry*

How do chaplains relate to the team as a whole?

How do you understand chaplaincy in relation to parish ministry?

What challenges, if any, does chaplaincy present to the team?

What opportunities, if any, does chaplaincy present to the team?

What, if anything, does the presence of a chaplaincy component within the team enable the team to do or to be that would otherwise not be possible?

What, if anything, does chaplaincy contribute to the team and vice versa?

Do you understand chaplaincy work in relation to the mission of the church?

If so, in what way?

Anything else?