



SERVING SPORT IN IRELAND  
2021/22



## Who We Are

---

Sports Chaplaincy UK and Ireland has had the privilege of providing pastoral support and spiritual care to sport in the UK and Ireland for over 25 years. The charity started by John Boyers whilst serving as chaplain at Watford Football Club and who went on to become chaplain at Manchester United has been in existence for many years. We now provide support to around 70% of the professional English and Welsh football clubs, plus nearly all the Scottish and Northern Irish Football League clubs. Our current CEO, Warren Evans, has developed sports chaplaincy throughout Rugby League in the UK and over the years we have developed chaplaincy in mainstream UK Team sports including Rugby Union, Cricket and Hockey from Elite to Grass Roots Level, serving men, women, boys and girls across all levels of ability including Disability Sport. We are expanding into Golf, Athletics and other Individual Sports including providing chaplaincy to Gymnasiums and playing an active role in providing chaplaincy at leading Sports events such as the Olympic and Commonwealth Games. We now have over 600 volunteer sports chaplains serving sporting communities across the UK and work closely with our global colleagues around the world under the umbrella of Global Sports Chaplaincy.

Sports chaplains have the privilege of building relationships with players, coaches and the whole staff and volunteer base at clubs. They are primarily encouragers but as they journey through life with all the staff at their club, they are able to provide pastoral support through all the difficulties and challenges that life brings as well as celebrating life with them. We have partnership agreements with many key national governing bodies in Ireland such as the Irish FA, Northern Ireland Football League and the North West Cricket Union. And our counterparts in the mainland include relationships with the PFA, English Premier League & English Football League, Racing Welfare, Welsh Cycling, Hockey Wales, Disability Sport Wales, the Scottish FA, the Scottish Premier League, Cricket Scotland and International Mixed Ability Sports where we are the recognised suppliers for this kind of specialist support to sport. So it is widely considered as not just a good idea but also important.

## Our Objectives

---

Sports Chaplaincy UK and Ireland is the charity that trains, supports and helps facilitate the work of club chaplains within each setting. This enables them to provide excellence in pastoral support and spiritual care across the full spectrum of support needed through the difficulties and challenges of life for the benefit of the whole sporting community irrespective of faith tradition or no faith background. We want to provide an expression of God's love and compassion to every sporting community on the island of Ireland regardless of age, ability or gender. We also partner and work with other organisations such as Sporting Chance, State of Mind and Care for the Family to ensure that individuals have access to the best specialist care in relation to issues such as bereavement, trauma, depression, mental health and addictions. It is recognised that there is a need for high quality pastoral and spiritual care. This generally involves visiting club offices and training facilities on a weekly basis and being available to listen and bring support to all. Each chaplain will bring with them a vast range of skills, knowledge and expertise. Our chaplains are extremely supportive, bring a non-judgemental, listening ear and an empathetic and compassionate presence.

# Sports Chaplaincy UK and Ireland Values

---

**Presence** - Simply means being there. A chaplain becomes a connection point from which a journey of building trust and building relationship begins.

**Excellence** - As chaplains, we aim to be excellent in all we say or do. We are committed to ongoing training and maintaining an attitude of excellence.

**Relationship** - Chaplains are by their very nature relational, so when engaging with people they are sensitive and compassionate. They are motivated by a real and dynamic Christian faith and a relationship with Jesus which is central to all they do.

**Confidentiality** - Chaplains are a trusted safe port of call with excellent listening skills and who understand the crucial importance of confidentiality within the heightened competitive community of sport.

**Humility** - Chaplains model integrity with a focus on serving and not seeking kudos for themselves.

## The Need for a Chaplain

---

Pastoral care encompasses a wide variety of issues and sports chaplains are able to offer support at times of personal crisis as well as during everyday life. Problems faced by athletes and staff in a sporting arena are no different to those faced by society as a whole but, there are some features unique to the sporting world, which create an additional need for chaplaincy support:

- The highs and lows and uncertainty of the sporting lifestyle.
- A high number of young people who are forging a career in the spotlight of their own communities, often needing a confidential listening ear.
- Players and staff's personal identity can get wrapped up in their club or sport.
- High odds against becoming a successful player can lead to feelings of failure and disappointment.
- Sport is physically and mentally demanding and in some cases potentially dangerous.
- Injured players often require ongoing care to keep mentally fit whilst recovering physically.
- Intense and unique working hours in a performance driven environment.
- The need to incorporate overseas players and their families into local life.
- Preparation for life after playing, "transitioning".
- Having a trusted confidant to discuss the wider challenges of life with a wider perspective than just sport.

# Sporting Life Endorsements



"Chaplains can be of help to all sorts of people involved with sport, when crisis, need, or difficulty comes. I commend the idea of sports chaplaincy and the work of Sports Chaplaincy UK to you."

**Sir Alex Ferguson,**  
**CBE, Director and Ambassador at Manchester United**



"Every athlete needs some kind of support and encouragement and a chaplain can be a valuable source of this support."

**Anne Wafula Strike,**  
**Former Paralympian and Gold Medallist**



"Chaplaincy brings a whole other dimension... It brings a personal touch. People feel they can be listened to as individual. If chaplaincy was established in every club I think it would be of huge benefit."

**Sir Ian McGeechan, Four Time British & Irish Lions Coach**



"There are so many things people don't see going on in an athlete's life away from the playing arena – and this is where the chaplain can play a pivotal role."

**Megan Bell,**  
**Northern Ireland International**



"Our club chaplain helped me to gain a unique perspective on issues I had. He went above and beyond for me in my time of need."

**Marcus Kane**  
**Glentoran FC Captain**



"We as a club have benefited enormously from having a chaplain and Dario has been of value to not only the players and staff but also the board."

**Gerard Lawlor**  
**Chairman, Cliftonville FC**

## What We Give



We currently have over 120 chaplains (and growing) supporting professional, semi- pro, amateur and all ability sports clubs throughout Northern Ireland . Our chaplains work on a voluntary basis and are dedicating regular time and energy to supporting their clubs sporting and non sporting staff at the training ground, at the stadium , in the boardroom and also away from the club setting . As a conservative estimate, Sports Chaplaincy UK are helping to resource Irish sport with around £500,000 worth of in-kind support. With God's guidance our aim is to increase the amount of support to the sporting individuals , clubs and communities in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in the season ahead.

## Training



Sports Chaplaincy UK and Ireland has worked to ensure that there is a level of consistency across our chaplaincy. To this end, each chaplain will receive training covering issues ranging from safeguarding to the unique role of being a professional sportsperson. We are working hard to develop sports chaplaincy across Ireland liaising with National Governing Bodies clubs and local Christian churches to find, equip, release and support chaplains across various sports. Sports Chaplains are there to support the whole club and so some clubs have more than one chaplain in post. All our chaplains agree to ongoing continuous professional development to ensure we are as "fit" as possible to deliver. This means undertaking specialised training in things like mental health , faith , bereavement, trauma, addictions and family care , etc

## Types of Support



Non- judgemental good listeners  
Develop Character & Life skills  
Provide a wider life perspective  
Mental health & Wellbeing issues  
Spiritual Care & Prayer  
Relationship Support  
Addiction Support  
Family Support  
Employment Support  
Financial/Educational Support  
Career/Transitioning Support  
Bereavement Support  
Trauma Support  
Suicide Intervention  
Hospital & Prison visits  
Take Weddings / Funerals  
Take Christenings / Dedications

Social Justice and Charity Support such as feeding the homeless or ending human trafficking

We can work positively alongside sports psychologists, and all the sporting staff for the betterment of the athletes

We work positively alongside management on the sporting and non-sporting side of the club for the betterment of the club as a whole.

**SPORTS  
CHAPLAINCY UK**  
SERVING SPORT THROUGH EXCELLENCE IN CHAPLAINCY



# HELPING TO DEVELOP THE COMPLETE PERSON



Sports Chaplaincy UK and Ireland is supported by:



# Sports Chaplaincy UK in Ireland 2020-2021

You are valuable, you are important and you matter. From the athlete, to the supporter, and every staff member, volunteer and helper in between – all are important, all are valuable and yes – all matter. The sporting communities in Ireland are amazing places where competitive juices and friendships flourish in the most wonderful settings. They are tough places also where resilience and mental toughness are key to underpin technical, tactical and physical prowess. And the truth is we don't have a sporting life which is separate from a working, family or social life – we just have one life. Sometimes life throws up challenges and difficulties and questions and very often when we least expect them. Sometimes they are not always easy to share or talk about. As a team of volunteer chaplains, we can bring care and love to everyone at your sports club that does not have to fit a budget or particular outcome. We are able to bring pastoral support and spiritual care that cuts across all agendas and is totally confidential and people centred.

This past year we have seen the demand for chaplaincy increase significantly and we have been able to appoint Sports Chaplains across a wide range of federations and clubs including the Irish FA Women's International set up & the IFA Boy's Elite Development Program. In the Irish League, Linfield Football Club appointed a chaplain to their Disability teams, Cliftonville and Crusaders Football clubs appointed chaplains to their Academy teams and Glentoran appointed a chaplain to their Women's Teams. An increasing number of Irish Rugby clubs have appointed chaplains including Portadown, Dungannon and Banbridge. An increasing number of Cricket clubs have appointed chaplains including Fox Lodge, Waringstown and Bready. We appointed a team of 3 Sports chaplains to Coleraine Rugby, Cricket and Hockey Club and a male & female chaplain to East Belfast GAA Club. Sports Chaplaincy is also now well established and endorsed in Shinty in Scotland. Mental health is a major topic of concern within every sports club and the recognition that a chaplain has a vital role to play through their presence and availability is evidence of the increasing significance of the chaplain's role. Our chaplains have been required more than ever to help and journey with people through troubled waters, as well as celebrating life with them and bringing fresh perspective. And we have been there to listen and provide practical support and advice to prevent other people's worlds from crashing down round them. In football we have chaplains at 32 of the 35 clubs in the Northern Ireland Football League. We have seen an increase in the appointment of chaplains in Northern Irish amateur football across a range of leagues and clubs up and down the country from Newbuildings in the Intermediate League to Larne Tech OB in the Amateur League and from Belfast Celtic in the Ballymena Provincial League to Seapatrick in the Mid Ulster League and we now have chaplains in gymnasiums and golf clubs and are looking forward to expanding sports chaplaincy across the Republic of Ireland. It is our privilege to serve you.



If your club or sport does not yet have a chaplain we would love the opportunity to serve you on your journey. For more information, please contact:

Philip Mitchell , Pastoral Director SCUK (Ireland)  
email: [ireland@sportschaplaincy.org.uk](mailto:ireland@sportschaplaincy.org.uk)  
mobile: 07788 254465

**SPORTS  
CHAPLAINCY UK**  
*SERVING SPORT THROUGH EXCELLENCE IN CHAPLAINCY*

