

An Introduction to Sports Chaplaincy

The purpose of this Introduction is to provide an overview of the provision of sports chaplaincy in a club or sports setting. A growing number of professional and amateur sports clubs are benefiting from the involvement of chaplaincy under the guidance of Sports Chaplaincy Ireland who are part of the global sports chaplaincy family and work in collaboration with Sports Chaplaincy UK. The chaplaincy role varies according to the requirements of the organisation in which it functions but overall a chaplain is there to provide "Ongoing pastoral and spiritual care, by permission, to those of faith or no faith, for the holistic well-being of all involved in the community of sport." (Global Summit of Sports Chaplaincy ministries 2017, Global Sports Chaplaincy Association, GSCA)

To function effectively, chaplaincy requires an understanding of the agreed role and a three-way commitment of the Club, Chaplain and Sports Chaplaincy UK to that role (see the Code of Practice).

Who we are

Sports Chaplaincy Ireland is part of the wider global sports chaplaincy family and works in collaboration with Sports Chaplaincy UK whose role is to develop high quality chaplaincy within sport. Sports Chaplaincy UK has been involved in chaplaincy as an organisation since 1991 providing training, resources and expertise to a growing network of chaplains and a wide range of sports. These sports include football, rugby union, rugby league, cricket and horse racing as well as particular developments in all-ability sport, women's sport and gym chaplaincy in recent years. In addition to club and individual chaplaincy support we have also provided chaplaincy at major events such as the Olympics, Paralympics, Commonwealth Games & Rugby World Cup.

Training

In the modern sports world it is vital that sports chaplains receive not just the best possible support but also relevant and appropriate training. To this end all new and potential chaplains attend a one day induction which includes an introduction to the world of sport, the place of a chaplain in that world, advice from other chaplains as well as safeguarding elements in sport. Chaplains are also expected, by signing up to the Code of Practice, to continue to receive ongoing training in key areas of chaplaincy as part of Continuing Professional Development. In this regard Sports Chaplaincy Ireland can provide in partnership CPD certified training in a variety of areas including Mental Health Awareness, Bereavement Support, Handling the Media, and Addiction Awareness: Gambling, Alcohol, Drugs and Pornography.



SIR IAN MCGEECHAN, OBE
Former Head Coach
British and Irish Lions

"Chaplaincy brings a personal touch- people feel they can be listened to as individuals. If chaplaincy was established in every club, I believe it would be of huge benefit to the game as a whole"



ANNE WAFULA STRIKE, MBE
Former Paralympian and Gold medallist athlete,
author, and advocate for Play for Change.

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

What we do - THE ROLE OF THE SPORTS CHAPLAIN

The role of the chaplain will vary according to the requirements of the club/sport, the sport's culture and the availability of the chaplain. However, all chaplains operate with the same set of values which spell out the acronym **PERCH...**

- P PRESENCE** - A chaplain needs to be present on a regular basis at the club or in the sports organisation he or she is serving. The Code of Practice states that this needs to be a regular weekly commitment. Players and staff need to become acquainted with the chaplain so that natural relationships of trust can be built up.
- E EXCELLENCE** - As chaplains we need to strive to be excellent in all we do. This is an aspirational value but is also about a chaplain's attitude and why we place an emphasis on ongoing training. Chaplains need to be committed to looking to improve in their chaplaincy role as well as having an excellent attitude in all their involvement with individuals and the particular club or sport they are serving.
- R RELATIONSHIP** - Relationships are at the centre of chaplaincy. We are a Christian organisation so all of our chaplains will have a relationship with Jesus as central to all they do. It is also essential that they are in good standing with their local church. In the chaplaincy role it is all about having good relationships with players, athletes and staff offering care and compassion with a non-judgemental attitude. In sports chaplaincy we use the expression "pastorally proactive and spiritually reactive", this means we pastorally care for everyone whether they have a faith or not and then react spiritually where appropriate, we are not there to force our faith on anyone. Sports Chaplaincy Ireland has good relationships with other national faith groups and so can offer support, direction & signposting in a multi-faith context.
- C CONFIDENTIALITY** - Chaplains need to be good listeners who can be trusted. In all areas of life trust is important but this is heightened in the highly competitive sports world. We expect our chaplains to observe this impeccably, it can take a while for trust to be earned but only a moment to destroy it.
- H HUMILITY** - A chaplain needs humility to understand that he or she is only involved in a chaplaincy role at the club or sport by invitation, there is no right to be there. Chaplaincy is an act of service for others it is not a badge of honour or part of an ego trip. Also the chaplain must appreciate that there are others in the club or sport who are involved in offering excellent pastoral care and as such he or she is operating as part of a team. Sports Chaplaincy Ireland has good working relationships with other organisations offering support such as Sporting Chance, The Mental Health Foundation and Care for the Family and we stress the importance of chaplains' signposting to these organisations if a particular area of expertise is needed.

What this can mean - DIFFERING EXPRESSIONS

All athletes, players, staff and families can benefit from chaplaincy support whether this is through life events such as injury, bereavement, transition or the celebration of specific occasions including weddings, christenings or Christmas carol services. Chaplaincy can therefore be expressed through the informality of ongoing relational care as well as more formal services. Chaplains can also provide a vital link to the local community and can be the first port of call with Foodbanks or homeless projects.

This Introduction has sought to show the generic nature of the sports chaplaincy role, for more specific examples of how it can help please see additional material/website for specific sports & contexts, including football, horseracing, gyms and all ability sport, etc.