

NHS Grampian Spiritual Care Committee



Report on the work of Healthcare Chaplains in NHS Grampian November 2005

In this first report to the Spiritual Care Committee about the work of the hospital chaplains I propose to outline briefly some of the areas of activity of the chaplains as they offer religious, spiritual and pastoral care to the patients, relatives, carers and staff in NHS Grampian. The Spiritual Care Committee can then determine the form and the nature of future reports.

Hospital Chaplains

Hospital chaplains serve all the hospitals in Grampian: a team of whole-time chaplains works in the Aberdeen hospitals; Dr Gray's hospital in Elgin has now developed a team of part-time chaplains; and community hospitals have part-time sessional chaplains. All these chaplains are currently appointed through the Church of Scotland but paid with money from various NHS Grampian budgets. Their responsibility, however, is not restricted to Church of Scotland patients – their role is to ensure that the religious and spiritual needs of all patients, relatives, carers and NHS staff are addressed, either by offering support themselves, or by bringing in the appropriate faith group representative.

In addition the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Roman Catholic Church have appointed their own denominational chaplains who look after their own members.

Head of Spiritual Care

In February 2005 Fred Coutts was appointed head of spiritual care on a 2 session a week basis. He has responsibility for leading the team of chaplains and developing the awareness of spiritual care throughout NHS Grampian. Clearly there is a limit to what can be done in such limited time. Various options were submitted through the NHS Grampian prioritisation process to satisfy the requirements of the NHS Grampian Spiritual Care Policy. However the present financial climate allowed only this interim and limited appointment. It is hoped that this post will be developed when finance is available. Only then will it be possible to develop properly the desired unified chaplaincy service in NHS Grampian.

Main area of activity

In such a report as this it is easy to create a false impression about the balance of the work of chaplains, listing the range of areas of activity. However the main basis of the work of chaplains is, rightly, the regular pastoral care of patients and their relatives and carers. Be it in the community hospitals, or the large Aberdeen hospitals, the work goes on, offering a listening ear and support to those who are facing the crisis of illness. And it is not only those who belong to faith groups who are supported. Everyone has spiritual needs and chaplains are there to help try to meet these needs.

Partnership with local faith groups

Chaplains work in partnership with local faith groups and churches in offering religious support to patients. The NHS Grampian Spiritual Care policy states: *Arrangements will be put in place to enable patients who wish, to record their*

religious affiliation and to request a visit from a chaplain, religious leader or faith community representative.

Within the constraints of patient confidentiality and data protection the chaplaincy secretaries seek to carry this out for patients admitted to hospitals on the Foresterhill site and Woodend. Where information recorded at admission is unclear, this is verified with the patient. Arrangements at other hospitals differ. Discussions are ongoing with nursing management to attempt to improve the spiritual and religious care of patients by ensuring that this information is properly recorded and passed to the appropriate people.

Caring for Staff

Although the main thrust of the work of chaplains is care of patients, providing spiritual and pastoral care for staff is a growing part of the job. At a time of change and uncertainty in the health service many staff are turning to the chaplains for a listening ear and support, either in a formal way or through casual meetings in corridors and wards. One example of caring for staff: the chaplain in one ward at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary has been working with other members of staff to produce a support structure for staff working in an emotionally demanding area of work.

Changes in chaplaincy staff

Chaplaincy has been going through a time of great change in staffing over the past couple of years. New chaplains have taken up post in all the Aberdeen hospitals and there are one or two temporary *locum* arrangements in place. This has been caused by the uncertainty of the necessary development funding and of future employment patterns. (See below under employment) We hope that a more permanent configuration will be established in June 2006.

Development in chaplaincy staffing at Dr Gray's Hospital in Elgin has taken place, with additional chaplaincy sessions deployed there after the closure of Spynie Hospital. A chaplain has also been appointed to the Oaks palliative care unit. Discussions with Presbyteries have taken place when new appointments are made in the community hospitals in an attempt to move one step closer to a unified chaplaincy service in Grampian.

Employment

Changes in the way in which chaplains are employed are awaited. The pattern since the inception of the NHS has been for the Church of Scotland to employ chaplains, the money coming from the NHS. The Church of Scotland has now decided that it will no longer continue with this practice and that no new whole-time chaplain post will be filled in this way. It was anticipated that a national scheme for the transfer of employment for chaplains from the Church of Scotland to the NHS would be agreed in the spring of 2005. However no agreement has yet been reached. This has exacerbated the confused management structure for chaplains and makes the creation of a unified chaplaincy service more difficult. Chaplains in Grampian are also currently excluded from the Agenda for Change process which is for NHS employees and as such are disadvantaged compared to chaplains directly employed by the NHS. If no national agreement is reached it is likely that the NHS Grampian chaplains will press for local arrangements for the transfer of employment.

Volunteers

A large group of volunteers works alongside the Aberdeen chaplains. Some are Sunday service escorts, bringing patients to services at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary (ARI), Woodend Hospital and Royal Cornhill Hospital (RCH). A smaller group has undergone a special 6 week training course and visit patients in wards in ARI and Woodend. Volunteers are now badged and undergo checking by Disclosure Scotland. We would like to put on record how grateful the chaplains are for the work done by this faithful group of volunteers.

Chapels

The NHS Grampian Spiritual Care policy emphasises the importance of “providing suitable space for worship, meditation and reflection in the hospitals in Grampian”. One significant recent development is the opening of a number of new chapels/quiet rooms.

At the heart of the new **Royal Aberdeen Children’s Hospital** is a chapel. This is now in regular use for private prayer and meditation. Facilities have been provided to make it accessible to members of any faith group or none. (eg dedicating washing facilities for Muslim users were designed into the original build.) Thanks to special donations a wall hanging and special furniture have been designed and provided. The chapel was visited by the Queen during her visit to carry out the official opening of the hospital in October 2005.

Planning had taken place for a number of years for the chapel in the new **Roxburghe House**. Spiritual care is very much part of palliative care and the simple, peaceful chapel with its unusual suspended sculpture is a wonderful facility for the house. Wall hangings designed and created by the Aberdeen ecumenical group, Christian Women Together now adorn the walls of the Chapel/Quiet Room at **Woodend Hospital** and at **RCH**. The Royal Cornhill chaplaincy department is now housed in the mobile building which once was the Children’s Hospital Chapel. When the old children’s hospital was being demolished the chapel building was moved to the Cornhill site. The chaplains there tell of the significance of now having their offices and the chapel accessible from the main part of the hospital, allowing patients, relatives and staff to drop in.

The long awaited chapel at **Dr Gray’s Hospital** seems to be one step closer with a site identified and additional money committed in addition to the original sum raised by donations from the local churches.

Worship

Worship is offered in a variety of different locations through the hospitals in Grampian, usually led by the hospital chaplains but sometimes by members of staff or groups from local churches. The opportunity to worship is much appreciated by patients. Volunteer escorts help with the services at Woodend, RCH, ARI, and Roxburghe House, bringing patients to the services and helping with the singing. Of special note is the introduction of a Sunday service at Dr Gray’s hospital, held in the Education Centre and led by one of the chaplains.

Muslim members of staff continue to make use of chapels for their daily prayers. On the Foresterhill site there is now a dedicated Mosque facility which is the main focus of Muslim Friday prayers.

NHS National Services

In the response to the requirement to provide spiritual care to all NHS staff, chaplains now provide a basic pastoral service to staff who work in two locations in Aberdeen for NHS National Services: the Scottish Blood Transfusion Service and the office staff at Bridge View (Practitioner Services and Pharmacy).

Teaching

Until recently chaplains had the opportunity to meet with all new members of staff during the Core Induction programme. This allowed them to give a brief presentation, outlining what chaplains do, what they could do for members of staff and what members of staff could do to help them. With the exception of RCH this no longer happens and it is increasingly difficult to provide staff with this basic information about chaplaincy and spiritual care.

To try to address this problem opportunities are now available to offer Spiritual Care Workshops to nursing staff and to address the group of graduates from the nursing course at Robert Gordon University, a proportion of whom will go on to work in NHS Grampian.

Chaplains are involved in a variety of other teaching sessions in universities with both undergraduates and postgraduates in nursing, divinity and medicine, as well as less formal teaching, such as the regular sessions with community nurses who are spending time in the Anchor Unit. The annual study day for chaplains, chaplaincy volunteers and those with responsibility for pastoral care in congregations continues to draw large numbers. The Study Day in 2004 was on Depression.

Trainee ministers continue to come on placement with the Aberdeen chaplains. The current pattern is for students to come for a 10 week full time placement during the summer period, gaining and insight into the work of chaplains and the hospital and sharing as fully as possible in the work of the department.

A new innovation this year has been the series of training sessions organised by one of the assistant chaplains at RCH in association with Alzheimer's Scotland, helping people lead worship in care settings with older people.

Bereavement

A major focus of the work of chaplains is offering care and support around the time of death. This might be in the anticipated death of a patient in the Anchor Unit, or Roxburghe House; the death of an older person who has spent some considerable time in hospital; sudden death following trauma, or child death, or the death of babies and stillbirths. Whatever the situation, chaplains offer support and sometimes will go on to conduct funeral services. They will also respond to the request to conduct family funerals for members of NHS staff.

Chaplains are involved in a number of working groups such as the NHS Grampian Working Group on Caring for the Dying and Bereaved which has recently produced two updated publications: one for relatives, *Help for you following a bereavement* with its association information pack, and *Getting it right at the end - Caring for the dying and bereaved – a working guide for NHS staff*.

The specialist work of the Bereaved Families support Group at the children's hospital continues to be much appreciated and is supported by the chaplain at RACH and other members of staff.

Memorial Services

Chaplains conduct a number of services of remembrance and thanksgiving on a regular basis, such as the pre-Christmas “Candle” service for children who have died. The large number of families who attend this service shows how it meets a very real need. There are other services, remembering stillborn babies and those who have died near the start of life.

Of particular note is the recently started but now well established service held in Queen’s Cross Church and led by the chaplains to remember those who have died in hospital.

Other Groups

Chaplains participate in a number of local, national and international groups too many to list fully. Here is a flavour: The Aberdeen Carers Forum; The Big Group (Brain Injury Grampian); various “Friends” groups; Pillar (supporting people with mental health problems in the community); Cairns Counselling Centre; CLAN (Cancer Link Aberdeen and North); SACH (Scottish Association of Chaplains in Healthcare); European Network of Health Care Chaplaincy.

Conclusion

The past two years have been times of great uncertainty in chaplaincy with many changes and uncertainties brought about by the move to single system working in NHS Grampian, the confusion about chaplaincy employment and the attempt to achieve chaplaincy staffing and management changes in a time of financial constraint. We hope that some of these uncertainties will be resolved in the not too distant future. At times there seem to be just not enough hours in the days to meet all the demands, but the work of chaplaincy continues, seeking to meet the spiritual, religious and pastoral needs of patients, relatives, carers and staff.

Fred Coutts

Head of Spiritual Care

October 2005

APPENDIX: HEALTHCARE CHAPLAINS IN NHS GRAMPIAN

Head of Spiritual Care:

Rev Fred Coutts

Chaplains: Aberdeen Acute Sector

Rev Fred Coutts

Rev Marian Cowie

Rev James Falconer

Rev Alison Hutchison

Mrs Trudy Noble

Rev Mark Rodgers

Rev Sylvia Spencer

Ms Monica Stewart

Ms Anita van der Wal

Chaplains: Mental Health

Rev Muriel Knox

Ms Pamela Adam

Donald Meston

Denominational Chaplains: Roman Catholic

Canon Bill Anderson

Deacon Peter Macdonald

Deacon Bill Joss

Mrs Margaret Coll

Miss Jackie Cozzi

Mrs Trudy Noble

Denominational Chaplain: Scottish Episcopal Church

Head of volunteer chaplaincy team:

Rev Sylvia Spencer

Aberdeenshire Community Health Partnership

Aboyne: Rev Douglas Campbell

Campbell: Rev Iain Sutherland

Chalmers: Rev Alan Macgregor

Fraserburgh: Rev Andrew Lyon

Kincardine Community Hospital:

Rev Gordon Farquharson,

Rev David Stewart

Glen O'Dee: Rev Donald Walker

Insch: Appointment awaited

Inverurie: Rev Ian Groves

Jublilee: Rev Thomas Calder

Maud: Rev Alastair Donald

Peterhead Community:

Rev David Ross

Turriff: Rev Sylvia Dyer

Ugie: Ms Sena Allen

Moray Community Health Partnership

Fleming: Rev Andy Willis

Dr Gray's:

Canon Alastair Doyle

Rev George Rollo,

Rev Mark Strange,

Rev Andy Willis

Leancoil: Rev David Young

The Oaks: Rev Stuart Macdonald

Seafield: Rev Andy Willis

Stephen: Rev Hugh Smith

Turner: Rev Kay Gauld