



# Anna Chaplaincy

## Offering spiritual care in later life

# Impact Report 2021

## where we are a decade on

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[annachaplaincy.org.uk](http://annachaplaincy.org.uk)



# Welcome

This report comes at a time when issues surrounding the care of older people have never been more centre stage. Fresh from celebrating its tenth anniversary last year, Anna Chaplaincy is going from strength to strength. With increasing demand for spiritual care, we felt the time was right to consider how those most closely involved with Anna Chaplaincy view what they do and what they most value about BRF's support from the centre. We therefore decided to undertake a survey of the Anna Chaplaincy network during Autumn 2020.

We were delighted that the highly respected independent researcher Jenny Kartupelis also agreed to conduct an audit of the effectiveness of Anna Chaplaincy. This report combines the key findings of our survey with Jenny's own research into how Anna

Chaplaincy is developing to meet people's needs.

Our vision is as strong as ever – to see Anna Chaplains in every small to medium-sized community in the UK—each contributing to the spiritual care of men and women in later life by being skilled listeners and hope-bearers. Anna Chaplains plant a flag in towns and villages up and down the land to signal the fact that *older people matter*.



Richard Fisher,  
Chief Executive, BRF



## Introduction

**Anna Chaplaincy** was founded in 2010 to support older people spiritually and in practical ways, and enable them to continue contributing to society through their experience, skills and wisdom. The movement offers pastoral care to older people and carers of all faiths and none, in care, private and community settings in many parts of the UK. It is a

Since 2014 the movement has been part of BRF, which promotes, resources and develops the initiative. Anna Chaplains are present with older people, their families, and care staff in a multitude of ways: as friends, pastors, and ministers; sharing conversation, hopes, fears, prayers and laughter. They are in family homes, communities and clubs, church

*‘Making sense of their past, facing the future, enjoying the present, even when it is limited.’*

growing network currently with about 160 chaplains and others in equivalent roles who are mainly lay women and men from a variety of Christian denominations, many giving their time on a voluntary basis, others with the financial support of their church. Anna Friends are volunteers who work alongside the Chaplains, individually or as a team.

*‘[Being an Anna Chaplain is] the joy and light of my day.’*

groups, care and nursing homes, through joy and loss, life to death. To those they serve, they are quite simply, essential.

Love is the basis of Anna Chaplaincy, and shines through all their interactions. An integral part of this approach is to give time, because time honours and values the recipient, and restores their worth.

*‘I felt commissioned to advocate for “those in silent places”.’*

Note: all the quotes in this report have been given by Anna Chaplains unless otherwise stated.

# The 2020 surveys

**The Anna Chaplaincy movement** has grown organically over the last ten years in response to demand and opportunity, and in 2020 decided the time was right to look more deeply into how it could increase its response: to ask questions about the nature and scope of demand, how provision could be made in a way that reflects its own Christian ethos and the universal human need for love, and how the women and men called to give spiritual care could be supported sensitively and effectively.

To capture as much information as possible, we have carried out two surveys in parallel. The first one drew more than 80 responses from Anna Chaplains to a detailed questionnaire, the second involved 15 in-depth interviews with Chaplains, their supporting Friends, older people and carers. The results have been brought together and are reflected in this report.

## What is the scope of their work?

- ❖ They serve people of all faiths and none (47% of older people served were not church members)
- ❖ The range of support they give older people and carers is very wide, from ‘just talking’ to acting as advocates for those who are alone or feel disempowered
- ❖ Each Anna Chaplain sees an average of 56 older people a month: some 8,960 people every month across the network
- ❖ Anna Chaplains believe that their greatest impact is to help people feel ‘loved and cared about’.

## Key findings

### Who are Anna Chaplains?

- ❖ 78% are volunteers, others are financially supported by their church, and occasionally by a charity
- ❖ The majority are Church of England (83%) and in the age group 61 to 70 (41%).
- ❖ On average, each is supported by eight volunteer Anna Friends
- ❖ They feel called to this work because it is rewarding and a privilege to serve older people.

*‘[My role is] fulfilling, energising and gives me a strong sense of purpose.’*

## Growing demand

Ninety-four per cent of Anna Chaplains responding to the survey believed the movement could and should do more to meet the spiritual needs of older people. They wanted to reach more older people and care homes; have the scope to spend more time with individuals and deepen relationships; offer more worship opportunities and more activities, clubs and groups. They also talked about the importance of nurturing faith in older people, through a variety of strategies such as recording a person's faith journey; taking Communion to the homes of older people more frequently; developing ‘church at home’.

*‘We are here to challenge the older person's sense of having no value.’*



# About Anna Chaplaincy

**On average**, each chaplain spends 12.6 hours a week in this ministry, amounting to over 100,000 hours or 624 weeks a year across the network.

Anna Chaplains provide support of many types, for example:

Talking to older people in private homes and care homes	68%
Leading services of worship in care and residential settings	67%
Spending time with an older person in their home, sharing Holy Communion or prayer with them	59%
Leading, visiting or helping at a church group for older people	48%
Offering spiritual care in care homes	48%
End of life care	45%
Supporting care home staff	41%
Offering advocacy	41%

Also frequently mentioned were bereavement care and conducting funerals.

**‘Listening to their story and helping them to reflect on it.’**

Chaplains said that the ten major differences they believed their ministry made were:

- ❖ Older people feel loved and cared about
- ❖ The older people we reach have more of a sense of belonging
- ❖ Helps us as a church to value older people
- ❖ Helps older people grow in faith
- ❖ Ensures older people who are frail do not slip through the net
- ❖ Helps us as a church understand the needs of older people
- ❖ Helps older people find meaning in life
- ❖ Gives a voice to older people
- ❖ Helps older people to meet and relate to others in their community.
- ❖ Helps older people contribute to church and/or community.

Being part of the Anna Chaplaincy network was seen as ‘essential’ or ‘very important’ by 59% of respondents. The six most valuable aspects were:

- ❖ Feeling connected to a network of people involved in older people’s ministry
- ❖ Meeting with others involved in the same type of ministry
- ❖ Access to training and opportunities to develop skills
- ❖ Being recognised and valued by the ‘home’ church
- ❖ Availability of advice and guidance
- ❖ Access to a wider range of ideas and resources

Respondents also valued the resources and information provided by BRF and were innovative in adapting these to their local needs.

**‘Enabling them to find a voice and someone who understands their point of view.’**

## TERMS AND CONDITIONS

An essential requirement is that each Anna Chaplain is appointed and authorised by, and accountable to, their local church or group of ‘Churches Together’.

The name ‘Anna Chaplain’ is a registered trademark, so those responsible for line-managing staff and volunteers are asked to sign a ‘Head Licence Agreement’ with BRF to commit to the principles, values and requirements of the Anna Chaplaincy model. It is a reassuring mark of good practice to know that any Anna Chaplain in the country is a part of this network.



# The freedom to be

## What matters to older people and how this influences chaplaincy

**Older people** interviewed during the surveys, and chaplains giving their observations, spoke of the importance of having meaning and purpose in life; of human touch and contact; of being part of a community and network of relationships; of being loved and cared about. **Without love, few people can thrive, even when their physical needs are met.** Anna Chaplains see their role as affirming and encouraging, helping older people find or remember their gifts, reconnect with their community and above all to feel valued and loved by God. Theirs is a ministry of presence and listening, giving time because time honours and values the recipient, and restores their worth.

them to respond appropriately whatever the age, background, ethnicity or situation of the older person.

**‘Helping them to realise their life experiences are valuable and must be shared.’**

**‘They come to know they are loved by God, and there is a loving community around them.’**

Chaplains also pay attention to touch and body language, with 98% saying their own facial expression was important, 85% being careful to read the other person’s, and 73% using appropriate touch to make contact and convey feelings.

**‘Authorities have no understanding of the importance of touch, they have got the balance wrong in terms of risk.’**  
*Care home manager*

Older people find or are referred to Anna Chaplaincy in a number of ways, and this is reflected in the great diversity of people with whom Chaplains work. They may be living in care or nursing homes, or sheltered housing, where perceptive staff have noticed an issue with loneliness, distress or grief; they may be members of a church in which the Chaplain has met them and offered pastoral support; they may be referred by a GP or other professional. A critical aspect of chaplaincy is therefore to recognise the great variety of older people and the requirement to adapt responses to suit individuals. Anna Chaplains not only have experience and sensitivity but are also embedded in their communities, helping



Describing encounters, Chaplains said they might initiate a conversation – perhaps by referring to a photograph or other artefact – while at other times they simply made the older person feel comfortable and waited to see what would emerge. They were unlikely to seek or direct any specific outcome from a conversation, and it was clear that most Chaplains were aware of the fine line between giving warranted assistance and undermining autonomy. When it was offered, assistance could be in the form of advocacy, locating resources or services, or occasionally solving a practical issue.

**‘Her thoughtfulness translates into practical things.’**  
*Older person*

# Spirituality and faith

**Spiritual life** is very important as we age: while physical and mental capacity may gradually be lost, the potential for spiritual growth remains and is a vital factor in resilience, contentment and living a full life. Chaplains taking part in the surveys expressed concern about the spiritual wellbeing of older people not being fully appreciated, perhaps because there is a strong focus on their physical health and safety. They wanted to educate churches about Anna Chaplaincy and the spiritual needs of older people and advocate on their behalf, to enable them to be more integrated into church life. Alongside this was the hope that the nature of spiritual care could be better understood by those working in health and social care roles.

Every Anna Chaplain must be affiliated to a church or group of churches. However, they have a clear remit that their work is pastoral and not about proselytisation. They have the knowledge, tools and freedom to nurture spirituality whether this be by reconnecting people back into a church community or providing the space and encouragement to reflect on life and appreciate more fully its value to oneself and others. They can help older people find perspective, and advocate for them to be given the greatest possible autonomy that their situation allows.



**‘To be a reliable, comforting voice and a friend.’**

**‘She provides a link between past and present.’**  
Older person

The Chaplains interviewed during our survey largely praised their churches for being engaged with their ministry in various ways, such as asking them to preach, providing rooms where groups could meet, and running courses on ageing and spirituality. But there was a smaller number who expressed concerns about lack of recognition and interest on the part of their church, some ascribing this to a disproportionate emphasis on engaging young people, and some finding misunderstandings on the part of their church about the chaplaincy role being to support older people in response to need, rather than to bring in new worshippers.

**‘Some [older people] want spiritual encounters but not “church stuff”.’**

Anna Chaplaincy is distinguished by its community-based, church-linked offering to all older people: ‘walking alongside them’, ‘spending time sharing God’s love’ and crucially ‘giving them hope’. They understand the imperative to feel connected into a wider sense of the world and humanity.

**‘What do older people most value? Strong relationships.’**

**‘A sense of belonging.’**  
Care home manager

The care providers interviewed, whether or not they were people of faith, recognised the importance of spiritual care and the impact of Anna Chaplains. Some described the effect of a visit on older people in relation to spiritual contentment or change: ‘They [older people] feel more at peace, more hopeful.’

# What we have learnt from 2020

**2020 was the year** of the pandemic: it was a year of profound change and apparent stasis going hand-in-hand, distinguishing it from any other times of war or disaster that we have recently witnessed. The position of older people, and attitudes towards them have been at the forefront of policy and commentary. The Anna Chaplaincy surveys were carried out primarily during the second lockdown and revealed that two-thirds of ministry was taking place by telephone, and half the respondents mentioned other forms of virtual ministry, using a variety of media, from email to Zoom, Skype and YouTube. Inevitably, their perceptions and experiences have been affected by the times that respondents were living through when they talked to interviewers. This makes these surveys particularly valuable, not only for their original purpose of developing chaplaincy, but also for what they tell us about the place of older people in society and what must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

**‘Most have lost friends, with no chance to say goodbye.’**  
Care home manager

## Attitudes to ageing

Perhaps the key point to appreciate is that all the problems created by the pandemic conspire to exacerbate existing issues rather than to create new ones. The very matters that should most concern us about ageing and ageism – attitudes that threaten self-worth, the ability to contribute to others and community, feelings of ‘invisibility’, the belief that older people are frail and unable to exercise autonomy – these are the stereotypes and attitudes that have become more entrenched.

Our surveys highlighted the issues of ageism – conscious or unconscious - that are already recognised as problematic in our society. Those most cited were: being less ‘invisible’ and enabled to make a contribution; finding a sense of self and purpose; having two-way relationships and being part of a community. But simple things too, such as more laughter, more fun and ‘having things to look forward to’ were also mentioned.

In fact, ‘invisibility’ was one of the words most used by respondents describing the situation of

many older people, whose potential contribution to society is thereby being lost. Yet many Anna Chaplains themselves are over 60, exemplifying the importance and value of ensuring older people continue to be engaged.

## What must change

A society which either side-lines a substantial number of its members, or casts them as too frail to contribute, is losing a valuable asset. Anna Chaplains are often older people themselves and so are well aware of the misconceptions that influence policy and practice. They can and do speak up for the position of older people, and advocate for change.

Not only must negative attitudes to older people change, but equally towards those who care for them, whether family or professional. Anna Chaplains see daily the demands on all types of carer and the tendency to undervalue them as unskilled or low paid workers; they see the truth of what carers do and wish to support them further.



# Anna Chaplaincy as a force for change

**Attitudes to**, and facilities for older people must change and improve, and Anna Chaplaincy intends to be amongst those at the forefront of making this happen. Our research has shown that Anna Chaplains are embedded in their communities and work closely with a large number of other charities, as well as public sector including the NHS and Local Authorities and private sector providers. Some lead third sector projects as their 'day job'. They are sensitive to local needs, yet part of a larger national movement, and ideally placed to see where change is needed and in some cases are already working to bring it about.

***‘Valuing older people, giving them a voice, keeping them connected and accompanying them on their journey.’***

## Our plans for growth of the service

There is a demand and desire for Anna Chaplaincy, and the movement is now planning for this, in terms of recruitment, funding and partnership. A number of specific recommendations have emerged from our surveys, which together with prayer, reflection and further consultation will give us guidance on the path forward.

Alongside our plans for growth of the service, we will be extending our support and training; Chaplains questioned in the surveys were keen to develop their confidence in offering and understanding five main areas: being alongside people with dementia; end-of-life, loss and bereavement care; supporting care staff and family carers; working with volunteers, teams and partners; introducing new initiatives such as Messy Vintage. Anna Chaplaincy will be reaching out to potential partners to meet these needs.

***‘I value the friendship and sharing of the Anna Chaplaincy and when I’m despairing about what is going to happen “after Covid-19” I think about other people’s plans and vision.’***

***‘Reach more people both in the care homes and in the community as well as deepen existing relationships.’***

***‘[Build] pioneering new models of church communities.’***

## About the authors

**Julia Burton-Jones** carried out the quantitative survey. She is National Church Lead for Anna Chaplaincy with BRF and has also worked since 2015 as Anna Chaplaincy Lead for the Church of England Dioceses of Rochester and Canterbury. She has spent her working life since the late 1980s focused on the role and care of older people, working on projects in Christian organisations and national charities. This has included action research, training and development roles, and writing several publications on ageing and dementia.

**Jenny Kartupelis** MBE carried out the qualitative survey and wrote this report. With a background in inter-faith relations, she is a consultant and author who has been researching into the care of older people over the last five years. The results of her work are the subject of two books: *Developing a Model of Relational Care for Older People* (Woodward, J and Kartupelis, J, 2018, Jessica Kingsley) and *Making Relational Care Work for Older People* (Kartupelis, J, 2021, Routledge).

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