

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 organization 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 organization 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, hockey, cricket, golf, boxing and horse racing as well developments in GAA, 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 Olympic Games, Paralympics, Commonwealth Games, Rugby World Cup and the UEFA Under 19 European Championships

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 induction training 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 Supporting the wellbeing of the Elite or Dedicated Athlete, Mental Health Awareness, Bereavement and Trauma Support, Handling the Media, and Addiction Awareness around Gambling, Alcohol, and drugs, etc.



DAVID HUMPHREYS , MBE

Irish Rugby Union
High Performance Director
Former Ulster and Ireland outhalf
72 caps for Ireland 560 points

“Professional, Elite or Dedicated Athletes sacrifice a lot in striving for excellence and whilst they may be high value assets - they are not Formula One racing cars - they are human beings. And along that journey I know that the sports chaplain can be a valuable confidential layer of support to both athletes and staff. Being there through the good times and the disappointments and challenges of life, the chaplain can help them hold their talent in conjunction with a bigger picture for their life ”



KATIE TAYLOR

World Lightweight Boxing
champion and Gold Medallist at
the 2012 Olympics in London

“When I was at the lowest point in my career - defeated and devastated at the Rio Olympics, there was a chaplain to listen to me and to help me see a bigger picture for my life”

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 organization 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-judgmental 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.

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 honor or part of an ego trip. Also the chaplain must appreciate that there may be 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 organizations offering support such as Care for the Family, Made for More, Alpha, Gamcare, Mental Health Foundation, Christian Guidelines, UCB Broadcasters and Good News for Everyone and we stress the importance of chaplains' signposting to these organizations 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's ever-changing events such as injury, bereavement, transition or the celebratory nature of specific occasions such as weddings and christenings or Sports Services and Christmas Carol Services. But chaplaincy is always best expressed through the informality of ongoing relational care, MEETING PEOPLE where they are at and providing unconditional love and support and a non-judgmental listening ear. For more specific examples of how it can help please see additional material/website for specific sports & contexts, including football, horse racing, gyms, golf clubs and all ability sport, etc.

