



SPORTS CHAPLAINCY

SERVING SPORT THROUGH EXCELLENCE IN CHAPLAINCY



SERVING SPORT IN IRELAND

Who We Are



Sports Chaplaincy Ireland are the Christian charity that are part of Sports Chaplaincy UK (SCUK) and also Global Sports Chaplaincy (GSCA) .They help coordinate and facilitate the activities of Chaplains within sport in Ireland.

We work in close partnership with clubs and sport's governing bodies who recognize the need for quality pastoral and spiritual support and encouragement throughout sport.

'Serving Irish Sport Through Excellence in Chaplaincy' is our tag line and this is our heart and DNA.

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 30 years.

The charity was started by John Boyers whilst serving as chaplain at Watford Football Club and who went on to become chaplain at Manchester United for over 25 years

We now have over 750 volunteer sports chaplains serving sporting communities across the UK and Ireland . We work closely with our global colleagues around the world under the umbrella of Global Sports Chaplaincy where there are extensive footprints in North America and Australasia

What We Do



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.

Our hearts desire is 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 and for the benefit of the whole sporting community irrespective of faith tradition or no faith background.

In the duty of care which clubs undertake to provide for their players and staff and volunteers, the unique role that a Club Sports chaplain plays, helps bring importance and credibility to ensure the care the club provides , continues to move from aspirational to real.

The chaplain is there for everyone, yet supporting just one person on their journey at any given moment ensures that the chaplains is "fit for purpose"

We also partner and work with other organizations such as :
Care for the Family , Alpha , Made for More and Sporting Chance to ensure individuals have access to the best specialist care in relation to

Trauma , Bereavement , Family Relationships ,Faith ,

Mental well-being and Addiction.

Where we are



We now provide support to over 80% of the professional football clubs in the UK and Ireland.

We have developed chaplaincy in mainstream Team sports including Rugby Union, Cricket, Hockey and now GAA from Elite to Grass Roots Level, serving men, women, boys and girls across all levels of ability including all Ability and Disability Sport. In addition to Horse Racing and Motor Racing, we are delighted to have expanded into Golf, Athletics, Surfing and Gyms .

We have the privilege of playing an active role in providing chaplaincy at leading Sports events such as the Olympic Games, Paralympics, Commonwealth Games and International Mixed Ability Sports Rugby World Cup.

We have partnership agreements with key national governing bodies in Ireland such as the Irish FA , Northern Ireland Football League , PFANI , PFAI 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 , and International Mixed Ability Sports .

We are the recognised suppliers for this kind of specialist support to sport and a number of those organizations fund our work.

So it is widely considered as not just a good idea but also
IMPORTANT

Role of a Chaplain



Sports Chaplains are specifically trained in getting alongside people to help them cope with the stresses of life, promote positive mental health and well-being and to enable people to realise their potential

On the playing side this may for example, mean supporting an athlete/ player with a long-term injury or helping a young player cope with disappointment and in general encourage them to hold their talent in conjunction with a bigger picture for their life.

For all staff, it will include listening to and caring for an individual through personal or family illness, crisis, addiction, or bereavement, providing family support and in general supporting individuals through life's ever-changing events.

Chaplains are also willing to support players and staff within clubs with life skill talks and help make charity connections.

All of this will generally involves visiting club offices and training facilities on a weekly basis and being available to listen and bring support to all.

And sometimes given the confidential nature of the work , the support will be provided away from the club facilities .

Each chaplain will bring with them a vast range of skills, knowledge and expertise.

Our chaplains are extremely supportive, bringing a non-judgmental, listening ear and an empathetic and compassionate presence

Sports Chaplaincy UK & 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 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 Value of a Sports Chaplain

Pastoral care encompasses a wide variety of issues and sports chaplains are able to offer support at times of personal crisis through every day 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 such as :

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 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 & mentally demanding and can be 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"

The need for a trusted confidant to discuss the bigger picture of life with

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, Glasgow Rangers & 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

"During my time as chairman of Cliftonville Football Club, we benefitted enormously from having a chaplain and Dario was not only of benefit to the players and staff but also the board"

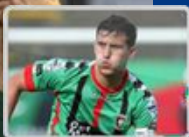
Gerard Lawlor, CEO Northern Ireland Football League and former Chairman, Cliftonville FC

"In my experience as a player at Kilmarnock and manager at Drogheda United and St Patricks Athletic, the club chaplain provides a brilliant service to players and staff alike and I commend the work of Sports chaplaincy Ireland **within sport**"

Tim Clancy, Former Manager of Drogheda United and St Patrick's Athletic FC

"The value a club chaplain brings in supporting players and staff alike across the journey of life is something that we as a club have seen the benefit of and I commend the work of Sports chaplaincy UK and Ireland **within sport**"

David Healy Manager, Linfield Football Club and Northern Ireland record goalscorer



Sporting Life Endorsements



"I was going through a difficult spell in my life with the loss of my sister and the decline of my performances on the pitch .

Meeting with our club chaplain really helped me gain a fresh perspective on life and faith and his friendship I still value to this day .

Jordan Stewart , Player - Linfield Football Club



"In over 15 years as a player and now head of Academy at Crusaders FC , I and many at the club have benefited from the listening ear , care and compassion given by our chaplain Ken who has been an ever present help in trouble and an encouragement throughout "

Declan Caddell , Head of Academy Crusaders FC , over 500 appearances for Crusaders FC



"Everyone in a football club environment needs support and encouragement at some point on their journey and David has provided a welcome layer of support to everyone at Cliftonville in the Academy set up "

Marc Smyth Head of Academy at Cliftonville FC and former Cliftonville FC captain



" I commend the work of Sports Chaplaincy Ireland in providing this valuable support to members and staff at golf clubs across Ireland - it's a really great idea ."

Ricky Whitford PGA Golf Professional Knock Golf Club



"As the Players Association , we are committed to ensuring that our members are afforded the opportunity to develop their potential in a professional and supportive environment . Sports chaplaincy Ireland through the support they provide to all of our members are adding to that commitment and we are delighted to endorse their work ."

Stephen McGuinness , Head of the PFAI



"Being part of an international set up is an incredible experience . And of course it brings challenges along the way through injury and the disappointments that come around selection .We all need support on that journey and our chaplain Tracey has been a constant source of encouragement to all the girls year round and has been amazing for us"

Marissa Callaghan Captain , N.Ireland Women's Team and Cliftonville FC



"As a hockey club with male and female players and staff , we are delighted to have Paul and Alix available to support our players and staff and we commend the idea and work of sports chaplaincy to Hockey clubs across Ireland"

John Bell , Secretary Banbridge Hockey Club and former player and coach



"With all the challenges that life and a career in cricket bring , thoroughly recommend the idea of sports chaplaincy to every cricket club "

Kyle McCallen , Former Irish Cricket Captain

Sporting Life Endorsements

"Professional, Elite or Dedicated athletes sacrifice a lot in striving for excellence 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 vital and valuable confidential layer of support to both athletes and staff and their families. Being there for them through not just the disappointments and challenges of sporting life in general, but also importantly through the good times, the chaplain can help them hold their talent in conjunction with a bigger picture for their life"

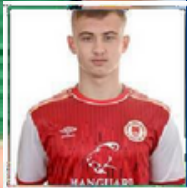


David Humphreys, Former Ulster and Ireland Rugby Player, and current High performance Director at the IRFU



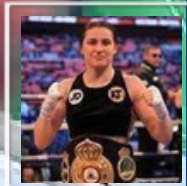
"Whether you are having the best season of your life, or the worst season of your life, or anywhere in between, make time to see the Chaplain"

Kevin Doherty, Manager of Drogheda United FC



"The weight that came off my shoulders when I spoke to the Chaplain was incredible, it really was. The Chaplain is not the manager, not the coach, you can speak and get stuff off your chest, and you know it won't ever leave the room. Every team should have a chaplain....and see him regularly"

Footballer, Ben Curtis speaking on RTÉ radio



"When I was at the lowest point in my career, defeated, and devastated at the Rio Olympics, there was a Chaplain there to listen to me and to help me see a bigger picture for my life".

Katie Taylor Professional Boxer and former International Footballer



"Sports Chaplaincy is a must for every club and international setting. If we are taking a holistic approach to the care we provide for our athletes and staff, then the chaplain has a vital role to play"

Gail Redmond, Northern Ireland Womens u17& u19 Coach and former NI International



"What a great idea to have someone like David available to come alongside our players and staff - to listen, to encourage, meet them at their point of need and to always help them keep a bigger picture for their lives"

Johnny Cullen "Academy Director, Ballynahinch Rugby Football Club"



"We all crave that shoulder to lean on. The support from our chaplain Martin and Heather has been absolutely amazing encouraging me and my family all the way. I wholeheartedly recommend any sports club having a chaplain and for players, coaches etc to reach out and use them. I am delighted to become an Ambassador for Sports Chaplaincy UK and Ireland"

Nick Williams, Junior All Black and former Ulster, Munster and Cardiff Blues player



"Sport presents some incredible highs and difficult lows. Having a chaplain to speak to and help you to think about God and his love for you in it all, can be a game-changer."

Elena Tice, Irish International Hockey Player

Sporting Life Endorsements



"I am not the only one to have benefited from the support of the club chaplain at St Pats through these last couple of years, but I am grateful for the listening ear ,support and guidance that Gerard and others within the sports chaplaincy set up have provided on my journey . I see the role of a sports chaplain as an important and valuable support for all players"
Ronan Coughlan , Fleetwood Town FC

"I



"We as a club have benefitted from the support that John provides as our club chaplain

Mark McCrystal , Professional Development Coach , Derry City FC



"Having Allyson as our club chaplain has been a benefit to everyone at Cobh Ramblers and and I would recommend this valuable service to all League of Ireland clubs and Amateur football clubs

Bill O'Leary Cobh Ramblers FC Chairman



George Best once said "I am talking about someone not necessarily connected with the football side of the club , that if you have a problem and it's a little bit personal , you don't want to go to talk to a trainer or a manager or a coach or even other players about it .If something is bugging you , you want to go and talk to someone else who can advise you , away from the playing side , away from the family , away from the club itself...young players have no-one to advise them - they have no- one to turn to when things go wrong

"George Best , Manchester United & N. Ireland (speaking in 1982



Delighted to say we are benefitting from having Ciaran and Liam from Sports Chaplaincy Ireland to provide a valuable additional layer of support for our u19 squad

Tom Mohan , FAI U19 Head Coach



"Every Player goes through their highs and lows. The chaplain is there to help them see the Bigger Picture"

Danny McGrath , Lommel SK (Belgium) and Ireland u17 player (former Bohemians FC)



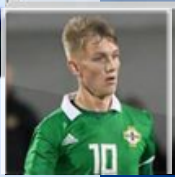
"In football, everyone talks. Managers are always talking, coaches are always talking, agents are always talking. As a chaplain, our job is to listen. It's our chance to let the athlete talk. To let them open up. To let them know you care about them. To let them know they can trust you. All this takes time to build, but in a nutshell, humbling yourself into becoming a listener and building a trusting relationship with them means a lot to them . Being someone, they can count on to be there for them, who won't judge them"
William Grattan , Chaplain of the Irish FA U15, 17 and 19 International Squads (3 years) .Former NI Under 21 International



"David has been our chaplain for over 6 years . I could never have anticipated the positive impact he would have on so many people's lives at our club - quite simply he has been a God send"

Lawrence Gilloway , General Manager Greenisland FC

Sporting Life Endorsements



"William was a tremendous help to me through challenges in my life and career and having an international team chaplain available all year means no matter where I play my club football, he is there for me. Highly recommend this support to all players

Eoin Galbraith, Leyton Orient
former Manchester United player



"The Irish FA are proud to endorse and recommend this important and practical service provided by SCUK which has been made available to all Football Clubs in Northern Ireland and which we at the Association continue to benefit from"

Conrad Kirkwood, President of the Irish Football Association



"Everyone within the Ards FC set up have been terrifically encouraged and benefited enormously from the terrific support of our club chaplain, Sam. Throughout our journey as a team, Sam has seamlessly enriched our close-knit support network for the players and staff alike."

Michael McShane
Head Coach Ards FC Disability Team



"Having a sports chaplain in a rugby club environment is a really great idea and may be more important than anyone can imagine. The work of Sports Chaplaincy across Ireland is inspiring

Eric Miller
Former, Leinster, Ireland and British & Irish Lions player



"Life is never straight forward or plain sailing and sport is no different. I have experienced many ups and downs through sport and having access to a sports chaplain could really help both young and experienced athletes deal with the challenges they are facing inside and outside sport"

Bethany Harper, Irish International Hockey Player



"Whatever our ability we are all likely to experience some difficulties in our lives at some point. Sports chaplains are experienced in guiding people to the right support service, whether they have experienced a bereavement, are coping with an addiction or recovering from poor mental health. This is an excellent initiative to assist our participants when they are most vulnerable"

Mark Goodwin, Head of Mixed Ability Sports



"Being a referee brings its challenges just like it does for players and managers - we are all out there in the spotlight. And we all still have lives to lead away from the game. We are glad to have our chaplain Mark with us on our journey over the past few years. He has provided a listening ear, healthy input and has been a source of support for a number of the senior referees"

Raymond Crangle, IFA Senior Football Referee



"The value a chaplain provides doesn't just apply on the pitch. Players spend 90% of their time away from the training ground and a chaplain can provide guidance for good habits off the pitch, so they can be a better person and come back with less distractions

Gary Deegan, Captain, Drogheda United

What We Give



We currently have over 300 chaplains (and growing) supporting professional, semi-professional, amateur and all ability sports clubs throughout 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 and Ireland are helping to resource Irish sport with around £1m worth of in-kind support. As a charity our aim is: "To provide and support chaplains in every professional and amateur sport in the UK & Ireland" and our Mission is: "To initiate, nurture, support and resource high quality Christian chaplaincy to our community called sport" across the whole island of Ireland

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 fitness and the challenges around illness, bereavement, trauma, addictions and family care, etc

Types of Support



Non- judgmental
Good listeners
Develop Character & Life skills
Provide a wider life perspective
Mental health & Well being 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 ,
ending human trafficking or
supporting the Blind & Deaf)
We work positively alongside
sports psychologists, and all the
sporting staff for the betterment of
the athletes .
And we work positively alongside
management on the sporting and
non-sporting side of the club for the
betterment of the club as a whole.



HELPING TO DEVELOP THE COMPLETE PERSON



Sports Chaplaincy UK and Ireland is supported by:



Professional
Footballers
Association



PFA IRELAND





Sports Chaplaincy Ireland 2024

These past 3 years we have seen the demand for sports chaplains increase significantly and we have had the privilege of being able to appoint Sports Chaplains across a wide range of federations and clubs .The diversity of these appointments include within international football - the Irish FA International Disability Squads , the Women's Senior International Team & Development Squads and the FAI U19 squad IFA Boys and Mens Elite Development & International Squads. Within Domestic football new sports chaplaincy appointments have meant that there are chaplains now serving across 75% of the League of Ireland clubs , and over 80% of the Northern Ireland Football League Mens and Womens sides plus there have been additional chaplaincy appointments to support the Northern Ireland Referees .

In the other main stream team sports we have seen chaplaincy appointments to the likes of Bready Cricket Club and Brigade Cricket Club , Ballynahinch Rugby Club and Sundays Well Rugby Club , Banbridge Hockey Club and Cork Harlequins Hockey club and Atlantic Technology University Ladies GAA Team in Mayo . New sports chaplaincy appointments include the Surfers of Bundoran, Roscrea Raiders Basketball Club and Strength Farm Gym and a growth in Golf Club chaplaincy has seen appointments from Ballymena Golf Club to Bearna Golf Club and from Portstewart Golf Club to Holywood Golf Club ,

And we have seen a huge increase in the appointment of sports chaplains in Elite sporting Academies where young people are aspiring to forge careers amid all the pressure and expectation that comes with that . And scores of chaplains have been appointed within Northern Irish amateur football across a range of leagues including the Amateur League , Ballymena Provincial League, Mid Ulster League, Newcastle & District League and Fermanagh & Western League .

So what of all of this support to sports clubs ?

The people within them are valuable, they are important and they matter to God .From the athlete, to the supporter, and every staff member, volunteer and helper in between - all are important, all are valuable and 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.

We know that injury , uncertainty and identity are among the challenges that sports people will face on thier journey and our chaplains have had the privilege of helping our sports people when those challenges arise . And of course we also know for sure that life throws up many other challenges and difficulties and questions 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 bring care and love to everyone at each 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 that is totally confidential and people centered

Mental Health and 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. The holistic care approach from sports organizations to support their athletes and staff has also meant that our chaplains have been utilized more than ever to journey with sports people , providing pastoral support and bring fresh perspective and encouragement. By listening well and providing practical support and advice , chaplains can operate in a space to prevent people's worlds from crashing down round them.

And chaplains are there always to provide spiritual care by permission to everyone. This will include praying for and with sports people. Listening well ,sharing and journeying with them , always ready to help answer those big questions sports people have inside each of them.



**If your club or sports setting does not have a
chaplain we would love the opportunity to serve
you on your journey**

**For more information , please contact Philip
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Ireland**

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SPORTS
CHAPLAINCY

SERVING IRISH SPORT THROUGH EXPERIENCE IN CHAPLAINCY

