

The Role and Contribution of a Multi-Faith Prison Chaplaincy to the Contemporary Prison Service

Final Report

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Main message bullet points

1. A diverse cross-section of the prison population of various faiths, and indeed of no faith, values the presence and contribution of prison chaplaincy to the modern English and Welsh penal system.
2. The role of the prison chaplain is not confined to the provision of religious services; extending to a central role in the provision of support services for prisoners, and in some cases staff, especially for those in crisis.
3. The role of the prison chaplain has changed, and continues to change in response to the socio-cultural, political and economic climate it operates within.
4. In order to ensure optimum parity across individual prison chaplaincies a clearer, centralized infrastructure for the management, coherency and accountability of each local prison chaplaincy department is required.
5. The professional development of prison chaplains; their training and mentorship, requires further development.
6. The prison chaplaincy space is a valued and cherished safe location within the prison; providing a crucial support mechanism for the vulnerable, and those struggling to manage the demands of incarceration.
7. The impact of the extremism agenda on both the role of the Muslim chaplain and the distribution of resources and training require monitoring, and further investigation.
8. A modern prison chaplaincy service needs to align its provision, structure and identity more clearly as a part of, rather than apart from, the current service provision model of the prison service.
9. Chaplains and the chaplaincy service need to articulate the way in which their humanitarian role is an integral part of their work as faith practitioners. This is important in the light of a difference of perception of the pastoral role of chaplains; with chaplains more likely to present their whole role in terms of religion; prison officers and prisoners more likely to highlight the humanitarian value of the role.
10. The multi-faith, multicultural model of prison chaplaincy appears to serve the prison service well, and is being gradually followed by other European nations. However, its future development and trajectory require careful nurturing, so that the model moves beyond innovation into a developing established practice that continues to address issues of difference and the challenge of effective team-working.

Executive Summary

This report is the outcome of research carried out by the Cardiff Centre for Chaplaincy Studies (a partnership between St. Michael's College, Cardiff and Cardiff University) on behalf of the National Offender Management Service. The research was into the contribution of prison chaplaincy in England and Wales to the contemporary prison service; to the lives of prisoners and the life of the prison. The research was carried out during the calendar year 2010, in seven sites in England and Wales, which represent a range of categories and estates within the prison service. The research methodology was qualitative, designed to provide a depth of description and analysis of prison chaplaincy; and in particular of the different perspectives on chaplaincy provided by chaplains, prisoners and prison officers. Representatives of those constituencies were interviewed in each site (together with governors and senior figures within NOMS), producing a total of 48 one-to-one interviews and five focus groups. Due attention was paid to the ethical questions raised. In particular, careful steps were taken to establish participants' informed consent. Further, care was taken to recruit an appropriate diversity of participants. Data were analysed to identify key themes that offered insight into the role and value of chaplaincy; and into the interaction of different perspectives on these areas.

All constituencies (chaplains, prisoners and prison officers) identified the primary role of the chaplain as being pastoral. This meant especially providing one-to-one support to prisoners, in a non-judgemental way, irrespective of their beliefs. Such support is characteristically offered at times of personal crisis (e.g. in times of bereavement; in relation to the specific losses associated with incarceration; when prisoners were feeling suicidal).

An important secondary role, identified across the range of participants, was providing specifically religious support, facilitating prisoners' religious observance through the provision of opportunities for prayer, worship and religious education and counsel.

The research identified a difference in perception in relation to the interaction of the pastoral and specifically religious aspects of the chaplain's role. For chaplains, the pastoral work was rooted in and motivated by their faith, which provided a close connection between the two roles. Prisoners and prison officers were less likely to connect the two roles; more likely to perceive the pastoral role in straightforward humanitarian terms.

The above difference in understanding of the chaplain's role connects with a perception that the role has changed in recent years. Participants generated a picture of chaplains no longer being there to convert, but rather to provide a service more focused on the prisoner's needs, especially for emotional support. The possibility of personal change through participation in religious activity appears secondary to this, although still referred to by prisoners and others. Other perceived changes had to do with the changing status of the chaplain, who is less likely today to be seen as a significant authority figure within the prison system.

A further change, which was reported by participants and is confirmed by statistical evidence, is that chaplaincy is now a much more multi-faith activity. Chaplains characteristically work in teams with members drawn from different world faiths, and

take seriously the responsibility to respond to religious diversity. Chaplains both regard this as a positive contribution to prison life, and identify some of the tensions which arise, not least in relation to allocation of resources.

The value of prison chaplaincy identified by the research lies particularly in the distinctiveness of the chaplain's role, especially in relation to the different role of the prison officer. Chaplains are identified as those with time for prisoners, who make availability a priority. Further, chaplains and chaplaincy spaces offer alternative locations for prisoners in which they can feel 'safe'. Both prisoners and prison officers identify an element of friendship and/or humanity (within boundaries) offered as part of the chaplain's presence in the prison. This contributes to a sense, particularly from prison officers and governors, that chaplains have something of a 'neutral', or 'independent', status within prison.

The research also offers evidence that the sense of the chaplain's 'neutrality' was constructed by participants, and prison officers in particular, as setting chaplains apart from the role of the latter, who need to be more concerned with, for example, security and control. This distinction is presented as a powerful narrative, that is in reality far from absolute. But it appears to facilitate chaplains' pastoral role and enables them to act as a safety-valve for some of the pressures resulting from incarceration. It may also need to be safeguarded to some extent, given that some participants identified ways in which over-involvement in security issues (not least in relation to extremism and radicalization) can compromise the chaplain's distinctiveness.

In the light of the above analysis of the chaplain's role and value within the prison system, the report concludes with recommendations about how the distinctiveness of chaplaincy could be supported and enhanced, not least through co-ordination, further training, and transparency about the particular contribution chaplains make to prisons and prisoners; and the way they offer a complementary role to that played by other staff.

Main Report

1. Introduction

This report presents the findings of a qualitative research project conducted by a team from the Cardiff Centre for Chaplaincy Studies on behalf of the Prison Chaplaincy Service, Ministry of Justice. The research involved observation of, and interviews and focus groups with, a range of constituent participants from 7 prisons over a 12-month period from January 2010. The report aims to provide an insight into the role, and evaluation of the contribution of a multi-faith prison chaplaincy to the contemporary prison service in England and Wales.

As prison chaplaincy does not exist in a vacuum it is necessary to begin by providing a brief contextual section that locates this research - and thus contemporary prison chaplaincy in England and Wales - in a meaningful socio-cultural and political context. A brief overview of the current prison chaplaincy service is then provided, followed by a detailed account of the research methodology, ethics and data set. The report then presents an analysis of the data set, providing specific implications of the research findings, and future recommendations for the prison service to act upon.

It is hoped that this report will be of interest not only to the prison chaplaincy and wider prison service but to prison chaplains, prison officers and prisoners who are served by prison chaplains in every prison across England and Wales. We would also like to take the opportunity of thanking all those who openly participated in this research, and therefore made it possible.

1.1. Context

The contemporary prison chaplaincy service sits in a unique, yet somewhat unusual corner of the English and Welsh criminal justice system in that it is a statutory requirement (Prison Act, 1952) that all 136 prisons in England and Wales have an Anglican chaplain. It has been a part of the prison system since its inception, yet is rarely the subject of any systematic scholarly research, evaluation or review (See appendix 1). In that sense, prison chaplaincy is, in many ways, ever present and enduring, yet rarely 'seen' in any official capacity.

Following Beckford and Gilliat (1998) and an increased awareness of and commitment to British multiculturalism, prison chaplaincy in England and Wales pluralized and the current prison chaplaincy service is the result of a decade of relatively unprecedented growth and diversification. This commitment fashioned a multi-faith model of chaplaincy that reflected the needs of a multicultural nation, and has forged a distinct change in the landscape of prison chaplaincy.

This is reflected in the appointment brief of the current Chaplain General and the establishment of the new Prison Service Chaplaincy Council in 2003. It is most significantly indicated by the employment and/or involvement of a wider diversity of prison chaplains from all the 'major' and 'minor' faith traditions; the unprecedented rise in the number of non-Anglican, non-Christian chaplains; a significant increase in the number of Muslim chaplains, currently standing at 198 (full-time, part-time and sessional); and a focus on building supportive relationships with religious communities that lie beyond the prison walls. The key aim of these developments, as is clear from Prison Standing Order 4550, *The Religion Manual*, is to enable prisoners to practice their own religion.

However, this report has been commissioned, and will be published during a particularly challenging time that will have clear consequences for both the shape of the current penal system, and the future direction of prison chaplaincy. As is apparent from a recent speech delivered by the UK Prime Minister at the Munich Security Conference (2011), the extent to which multiculturalism promotes separate cultural identities, or social cohesion continues to be a matter of debate; as does therefore the efficacy of those models of multiculturalism that have hitherto driven public policy.

Further, contemporary prison chaplaincy serves a culturally plural society in which the place of religion and faith is contested, at a time of significant socio-cultural flux and contradiction. On the one hand, there is a much-heralded secularization of UK society. On the other hand, the last decade has seen significantly heightened interest in the public significance of religion. This has included interest in, and sensitivity to, the growth and presence of the Muslim faith (Marranci, 2009; Gilliat-Ray, 2008). To complicate matters yet further, interest in religion is sometimes heightened by perceived threats of terrorism, fundamentalism and extremism; not least the threat to security.

And as the world struggles to manage the effects of global recession, the UK's first coalition government since World War II is implementing a programme designed to promote financial recovery, built around significant cuts in public sector spending. This has clear implications for the resources available to social institutions such as

prisons, and will inevitably result in changes to the current shape and provision of the criminal justice system.

This period and the economic, political and socio-cultural factors at work in it, therefore, promise challenges for an institution that houses those whose incarceration signals their lack of integration within the 'big society'. And there are particular challenges for a prison department that serves to support the faith practices of a continually diversifying, complex, fractured society, with a decreasing attachment to institutional religion, if not to faith and spirituality. This represents a 'snapshot' of the complex context in which prison chaplaincy now finds itself, which illustrates that research into its role, and evaluation of its contribution, is therefore particularly timely.

1.2. Current England and Wales Prison Chaplaincy

There are currently 357 employed (full- or part-time) prison chaplains from six denominations/faiths (at the time of writing: 134 Anglican, 92 Muslim, 77 Roman Catholic, 50 Free Church, 2 Sikh and 2 Hindu chaplains). Numbers of chaplains paid sessionally, or unremunerated, are more difficult to determine. A reasonable estimate would be that there are between 700 and 800 serving in these ways, representing a wide range of denominations or faiths. Chaplains are supported in their work by volunteers, estimated through a mapping exercise undertaken some years ago to number some 7,000.

Chaplains work across 136 prisons in England and Wales, serving a current population of 84,409 prisoners (Ministry of Justice, 2010). Chaplains serve a prisoner community of whom 49% are reported as Christian, 12% Muslim, 2% Buddhist and 35% as claiming to have no religion at all (Ministry of Justice, 2010). The main purpose of the prison chaplaincy service in England and Wales, as outlined in the Prison Rules (1999) and PSO 4550, is to support and serve the religious needs of the prison population. However, as our report will indicate the role of the prison chaplain extends far beyond an exclusively faith based remit into the centre of everyday life within the prison community.

As will be explored more fully later in this report the role of the prison chaplain is relatively diverse and can involve anything from the provision of religious services; through support and counseling services for prisoners in crisis; to provision of various courses of education. At the time at which the fieldwork was conducted, the prison chaplaincy infrastructure was stratified with a small Prison Chaplaincy Service HQ headed by the Chaplain General, with a team which includes Anglican, Free Church, Roman Catholic and Muslim representation, together with administrative staff. There was also a Chaplaincy Council, with Faith Advisors from different faiths, established in 2003. England and Wales were divided into various regions, which at the time of the research were the responsibility of a regional chaplain, reporting to HQ. Each regional chaplain was then responsible for a team of individual coordinating prison chaplains who were usually responsible for the management of each individual prison chaplaincy, accountable to a member of their prison's management team. Historically the coordinating chaplain has tended to be Anglican, though this is now changing, through the opening up of the role to all employed chaplains with the appropriate competencies. There are currently some 41 non Anglican Co-ordinating Chaplains, some in a shared role (see further section 3.2).

At the time of publication, the prison service is undergoing a process of re-structuring with a move away from Regions and Directors of Offender Management. Both the central HQ structure and the delivery of services through Deputy Directors of Custody offer Chaplaincy an opportunity to reflect on how its structures may best support chaplains in establishments – a process that is currently under way.

2. Approach

The rationale for taking a qualitative methodological approach to conducting research into prison chaplaincy lies in the nature of the service it provides. Evaluating the value of modern prison chaplaincy requires attending in some depth to the voices of those it serves, in order to establish a hitherto unknown picture of the nature and interaction of perspectives on chaplaincy presented by prisoners and prison staff, as well as by chaplains. Therefore, in order to capture the 'voice' of a range of constituencies of participants the research methodology for this project is qualitative, with a particular interest in drawing from ethnographic methodology in order to locate chaplaincy within the wider prison culture(s).

In order to proceed iteratively and cumulatively, the design and implementation of the research instrument involved four key phases, as outlined in the model below:

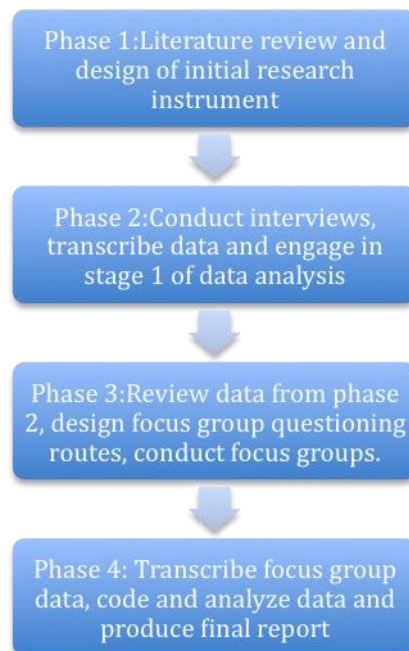


Figure 1: Model of Research Process

2.1. Phase 1

This began with a standard review, analysis and categorisation of the existing literature. Although some interesting earlier work was noted (Murphy, 1956; Shaw, 1995) the majority of the review focussed on the period since the publication of Beckford and Gilliat (1998) and of the Prison Rules (1999).

The initial review of literature (see appendix 1) revealed a paucity of any systematic, academic research into prison chaplaincy prior to, or post Beckford and Gilliat (1998); thus qualifying a clear need for this research. The review specifically identified a pressing call for research that extended beyond the experience and consequent voice of the white, male Christian prison chaplain to capture a range of voices that more fully represented the cultural and religious plurality of the prisoner, and prison staff population. Particularly excluded voices to date included; the voices of women prisoners, staff and chaplains; prisoners reporting no faith and chaplains, staff and prisoners of faiths considered 'minority' within the prison service such as Pagan, Quaker, Sikh or Hindu. There has been some promising work conducted into the experiences of the Muslim prisoner (Beckford & Khosrokhavar, 2005; Spalek & El-Hassan 2007 and Marranci, 2009) but significantly less into those of the Muslim chaplain, with the exception of Gilliat-Ray (2008; 2010). Therefore the findings of the initial review, along with the specifications 1.1 to 3.5 of the Ministry of Justice invitation to tender document (2008), were drawn from to inform the design of an initial research instrument that would rectify and redress this imbalance.

This took the form of a set of key interview questioning routes (See appendix 2) that were to be conducted with five different constituencies of participants. These included prisoners, prison chaplains, prison officers, prison governors and, where possible, key stakeholders (within the National Offender Management Service). In all questioning routes, questions were structured to move from those which were more open to those that were more directive; and from those to do with broad understandings and experiences of chaplaincy, to those which are specific to particular areas of operation.

As the range of the various participant constituencies was diverse, and often potentially polarised, slightly different questioning routes were designed to support elicitation of the distinct experiences and viewpoints of each constituent group. For example, a prison chaplain's experience of prison chaplains was likely to be very different to that of a prisoner. However, standard questions were also included across constituencies in order to provide opportunities for interesting comparative analyses of experience and opinion.

In keeping with the tenets of a qualitative, ethnographic methodological lens along with the literature review, interviews and focus groups the research team engaged, wherever possible, in participant observation¹ and some shadowing. This involved keeping a field journal where the experiences and observations of the researcher were recorded. These tended to include observations and conversations that extended beyond the recorded interviews and focus groups that provided rich contextual data.

¹ Participant observation is an ethnographic research methodology commonly used by social scientists whereby observation of and participation in the daily life of the field site is engaged in to provide a richer understanding of the everyday.

The value of this activity is that it provides an insight into the socio-cultural context the interviews and focus groups are occurring within, and essentially being born from. For example, it is often beyond the boundaries of the formal interview or focus group, during casual conversations and interactions that occur in the chaplaincy office, on the wing during induction or during a cell visit that the less self-conscious, and therefore often more revealing, performances occur. It is hoped that this thicker description has served to deepen, nuance and ultimately contextualise the core data set.

2.2. Phases 2 and 3

In order to accurately represent the diversity of prison establishments in the England and Wales, and thus the plurality of prison chaplaincies that respond to and serve each prison's specific populations needs; five initial prisons were selected from across Britain. These included a prison in the High Security Estate, a Category B Training prison, a prison in the Women's Estate, a Young Offenders Institution and a busy local prison. Towards the end of phase 2 it was clear that, due to restrictions born from access, and prison population demographics, certain voices from several minor faiths were not included in the data sample. Therefore, in order to ensure that this was rectified two additional prison sites were selected and visited during the end of phase 2.

The strategy for recruitment and selection of respondents was governed by a desire to produce a piece of research that reflected the full diversity of voices available across the prison service; in particular, being sensitive to diversity of role, faith and indeed no-faith, age, gender and ethnicity. In order to meet this remit the initial intention had been to recruit and interview 3 prisoners, 3 prison officers, 2 prison chaplains and 1 prison governor from each site. Recruitment and selection of each constituent group was to be conducted on site by the researcher, following an initial publicity sweep.

However, following the selection of the initial 5 sites and confirmation of their agreement to participate in and host the research, it was agreed that the research process was to be facilitated, and thus mediated by the coordinating chaplain from each prison. For any research process it is necessary to build some element of flexibility into the initial research instrument design, as it is inevitable that disparity between the ideals of the design and its actual application in the field will occur. This became apparent with this research following completion of phase 1.

As a result of the delay in receiving security clearance, some five months into the project, along with various problems negotiating access to each prison chaplaincy department and a poor initial response to publicity material, the recruitment and selection strategy was reviewed. In particular, in order to expedite the recruitment process in the limited time available it became necessary that for the recruitment of prisoner respondents, in certain sites, we drew heavily upon the assistance of the coordinating chaplain.

Although an unexpected occurrence this proved beneficial in establishing more engaged relationships with each chaplaincy, and time spent in each centre, being assigned keys in one prison. However, it also proved challenging in that recruitment and selection became an unanticipated shared process with a designated chaplain who tended to be, though was not always, the very busy coordinating chaplain.

Therefore, in order to mitigate the danger of recruiting a biased, unbalanced or unrepresentative constituent cohort it was important to ensure each chaplain was fully briefed on the requirements of the initial research instrument, in particular the criteria for recruitment and selection of respondents. To support this process and the fact that the field researcher was more remote than had been hoped; an information pack was also produced and distributed to each site to provide a standard source of information for all chaplaincies, and more importantly potential respondents. This

contained important information about the research process and eventual output, the research team and the interview and focus group process.

Although recruitment of prisoners tended to be an activity shared with the chaplain, recruitment of prison chaplains was more straightforward as a result of more direct access. Prison officers were a less straightforward respondent group to recruit, as it was often difficult to negotiate time away from their duties to conduct interviews. However, the same criteria for selection were applied and a range of more direct recruitment methods engaged with, involving visits to wings to recruit via direct requests and the placing of an ad in internal staff memos.

On reflection, it may have been somewhat naive to expect to have been able to independently recruit four groups of constituent participants in five different prisons with only a 7-month timeframe. As it turned out, due to the above moves to mitigate difficulties of recruitment, the actual final data set was representative of the requirements of the initial research instrument and recruitment and selection strategy. Where there were gaps, as mentioned above, secondary sites were visited to account for those voices not included. In that sense, the objectives of the research instrument remained consistent and were fully realised; it was the methodologies for realising those objectives that had to be modified in response to unforeseen challenges posed by the very nature of the research site.

Another unexpected occurrence was the time it took to complete phase 2, and therefore a delay in commencing phase 3. This was largely due to the aforementioned delay in receiving security clearance and then problems negotiating dates to conduct interviews with each of the five chaplaincies. However, interview data was transcribed immediately following each set of interviews and shared. This meant that as the data set grew exponentially it was constantly visited, coded and re-coded as themes and issues arose. These themes were then nuanced, and to an extent tested, through considering them alongside contextual data gained from participant observation and shadowing.

This allowed for an expedient move from phase 2 to 3, as a range of attendant issues and themes had become evident relatively early in the analysis and coding of the phase 2 data. These themes were then used to design phase 3 of the research instrument that took the form of a set of questioning routes to be posed within a series of focus groups. The purpose of the focus groups was to further test and refine the themes that had presented from the second phase of interviews. The same criteria that had guided selection for interviewees were applied for recruitment of focus group participants, including a proviso that participants had not already been interviewed during phase 2.

Therefore, the time restrictions and problems negotiating access with various gatekeepers were ameliorated and sufficient time to digest and discuss the data rebuilt into the research instrument. Lessons have been learned about the benefits and challenges of conducting research across multiple sites where access to respondents is, understandably, limited by the prison regime and engagement and negotiation with a range of institutional gatekeepers. However, regardless of the challenges and unexpected occurrences that arose in conducting a 12 month qualitative research project in 7 prisons with 5 constituent participant groups; the final

data set is rich, and represents the diversity of voices, experiences and perspectives the research team had hoped to capture.

2.3. Research Ethics

Research that involves observing, interviewing and recording the voices and experiences of vulnerable communities such as prisoners, and security sensitive institutions such as prison, requires a rigorous ethical approach. Therefore before fieldwork began the ethical parameters of the project were discussed and set by the research team, and then ethical clearance was sought. This was granted following an application submitted to the Research Ethics Committee of the School of Social Sciences at Cardiff University.

(<http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/soci/research/researchethics/index.html>).

This involved outlining the research methodology in a proposal that explained: how informed consent was to be gained, anonymity ensured, secure management of data guaranteed and ethical procedures for the selection of participants followed. Draft versions of a consent form and corresponding information sheet (see appendix 2) were also included.

However, ethicality in the field should not end with gaining informed consent, as there are always variables that can lead to individuals feeling obliged or coerced into participation. This is particularly the case in prisons where prisoners have a particular relationship with figures in authority, and with those who have access to resources they do not. There is also the question of prison professionals feeling obliged to participate in officially sanctioned research. Therefore, when recruitment of certain constituent participants is sub-contracted out to a member of the department the research is essentially focussing on, a possible conflict of interest occurs.

Therefore, in order to mitigate the possibility of the above after the recruitment of participants each was asked again prior to interview, in private, if they were happy to commence the interview; and certain that they understood what the research was for and the implications of signing the consent form. Every individual interviewed, or who participated in focus groups, was given the opportunity to withdraw immediately prior to interview, or do so at a later date.

The research team also felt an ethical responsibility to maintain the clarity of each respondent voice, and therefore includes these throughout the following report. As the research involved the notion of a multi-faith prison chaplaincy it was also an ethical, as well as methodological imperative to ensure that the selection of participants included as wide a range as possible of individuals from different faiths, and indeed those of no or undecided faith.

Due to the sensitive nature of the data being recorded access was strictly limited to the two research team members and administrator. All interview and focus group data was transcribed, anonymised and securely stored using a closed coding system, on a security enabled computer system.

Once the report is published all respondents will be informed and those interested in reading it informed of how to access a copy; those unable to access the Internet will be provided with a paper copy.

2.4. The Data Set

Phases 2 and 3 of the data collection process resulted in 3 to 4 separate visits to 7 different prisons over a 7 month period; often spending at least half a day at a time in each site. The final data set therefore includes; a set of observational notes from each of those visits, 48 one-to-one interviews and five focus groups. A detailed breakdown of the composition of each constituent participant group follows:

Prisoners:

In total 15 prisoners (11 male and 4 female) were interviewed and all were either Muslim, Christian or of no-faith, which often turned out during interview to loosely equate to agnostic. This was not due to pre-selection, rather the sample of individuals who volunteered and/or were available for interview at the time of the research. Only one prisoner interviewed during this project declared himself an atheist, and this raises an interesting question about the qualitative value of the designation of 'no-faith' or 'nil' for recording religion at the induction process in prisons.

Two prisoner focus groups were conducted; one with a group of four male and the other with three female prisoners. The composition of the male group included a Pagan, Muslim, Roman Catholic and an agnostic and the female group three agnostics.

Chaplains:

14 prison chaplains (9 male and 5 female) were interviewed from the following faith communities; Anglican, Muslim, Roman Catholic, Free Church, Quaker, Pagan, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh and Jewish.

Prison Officers/Governors:

As mentioned earlier the recruitment of prison officers and availability of some prison governors was less straightforward due to the operational requirements of each prison establishment and individual responsibilities. However, 12 prison officers (5 female and 6 male) and 4 prison governors (3 male and 1 female) were interviewed.

Three focus groups were conducted in three different prisons with a mixture of prison officers and chaplains. Group 1 was conducted in the women's prison and involved two prison chaplains (Methodist and RC) and a female prison officer (Christian); group 2 in a Cat B local men's prison with two female chaplains (one RC and one Anglican) and two male prison officers (both agnostic). The third focus group was conducted in an inner city local men's prison with a group of 5 chaplains (Anglican and Roman Catholic). As with interviews each focus group was subject to operational demands on the day and this resulted in losing one staff member from focus group 1 at the last minute, and no availability of prison officers for group 3. As with the interviewing schedules although this is not ideal in terms of maintaining a sampling balance conducting qualitative research in busy contemporary prisons faces particular challenges, specifically in terms of the operational needs of the establishment taking precedent, quite rightly, over those of the research team.

Others:

Three additional interviews were conducted with the Director General of the Prison Service at the start of the research process, Phil Wheatley, his successor Michael Spurr (whose post is now designated as Chief Executive Officer) and the Chaplain General, The Ven. William Noblett.

3. Results

3.1. Introduction

'Prison chaplains are also a little bit of a moral compass, if you like, in that the way that they operate within the establishment gives us that focal point around faith, around decency, alongside the more formal things that we do.'

(Prison Governor, 2010)

This research captures and explores what is distinctive about the role and contribution of prison chaplaincy, rather than providing a descriptive account of a prison chaplain's job. It achieves this through a sustained focus on reporting and exploring those aspects of the role that were identified as important by the various constituent participant groups. Chaplains do lots of things that interviewees rarely, or never mentioned; and in many cases that were never observed. This of course does not mean that they are unimportant, but that any full discussion of them lies beyond the data set, and thus the remit of this particular piece of research. Therefore, the following section will present our findings of what the prison community feel is distinctive about the role of the contemporary prison chaplain; followed by an exposition of the various contributions that role is perceived to make to the prison system.

As alluded to earlier the prison chaplaincy service in England and Wales is relatively unique and innovative in its structure and provision, particularly when set in a European and indeed global context. There are few workplaces where you would find a 20 year old Muslim Imam, a 48-year-old female Anglican priest, a Buddhist, a Catholic nun and a Pentecostal preacher all working together to attend to the needs of offenders. Prison chaplaincy thus provides a fascinating lens for exploring the realities of ecumenical and inter-faith working relationships in an institution that, par excellence, represents in microcosm the richness and the failures of UK multiculturalism.

To look at and listen to the prisoners and staff found in a prison chaplaincy department on any day of the week is to be presented with many of the social concerns and challenges that lie at the centre of contemporary UK society. In that sense, research into prison chaplaincy also nuances an understanding of incarceration and prison, as the critical eye pauses on the aspects and places of the prison rarely subjected to any sustained critical gaze, yet commonly referred to by staff and prisoners as its 'soul', 'conscience' and 'moral compass'.

3.2. The Changing Role of the Prison Chaplain

'You only have to have eyes to see and ears to hear to know that the chaplain's role has changed a lot.'
(Prisoner, 2010)

UK society has changed considerably in the past thirty years and is now characterised by a diverse mixture of ethnicities, faiths, languages and cultures. This multiculturalism is unfortunately, though somewhat inevitably, reflected in its prison populations. In 2009 just under 27% of the prison population was from a minority ethnic group, with 33% of those from a minority ethnic group identified as foreign nationals (Ministry of Justice, 2010). Further, as reported in 1.2, religious diversity is significant in prisons. Here percentages are not necessarily in line with those in wider society. Both the 12% of the prison population who are Muslim and the 2% who are Buddhist represent significantly higher proportions of those faiths than in the population at large. This nonetheless means that the prison chaplain is now serving an ever-diversifying prisoner population that presents a range of religious and pastoral needs that a chaplain thirty years ago may not have been well prepared for.

In response to this cultural plurality the demographic profile of the prison chaplain has followed that of wider society, but more particularly of the prison population. It has therefore extended beyond that of the white, middle aged, often middle class male Anglican Priest who enjoyed the 'ear of the governor'.

'I would say that when I first joined 22 years ago they were employing, like loads of naive old men who used to cycle to the prison with bicycle clips and liked a drink, or two. I think that has changed a lot, the kind of person who becomes a chaplain.'
(Prison Officer, 2010)

Indeed, the profile of the contemporary prison chaplain is diverse and continuing to diversify with individuals coming into prison chaplaincy from a wide range of ethnicities, ages, faith traditions, classes and often following substantial pre-prison occupations; commonly ministry, education, and other areas of the criminal justice system.

The ascendancy of the gate-keeping Anglican chaplain that concerned Beckford and Gilliat (1998) could be viewed as slowly coming to an end, with a more diverse set of gatekeepers controlling resources and the flow of people into, and out of the prison chaplaincy. In the 7 prisons we visited for this research 6 co-ordinating chaplains (4 female and 2 male) were white Anglicans and only one a male Muslim Imam. However, across England and Wales there are over 40 non Anglican Co-ordinating Chaplains, with significant numbers of Free Church and Muslims and a small number of Roman Catholics in this role, and a few instances where members of different faiths act as a co-ordinating team (including at one of the research sites).

Earlier attempts in the USA to delineate the role of the prison chaplain were conducted by Murphy (1956), Shaw (1995) and Sundt and Cullen (1998). All of these studies - conducted via postal questionnaire and solely with prison chaplains - identified the core three activities for the prison chaplain as (1) counselling inmates (2) conducting religious services and (3) helping inmates to adjust to prison. However, our research findings, gained from various constituent participant groups,

suggest that attempts to understand the distinctive role of the prison chaplain through this kind of hierarchical classification can be misleading.

In response to the question 'what is the most important role of the prison chaplain?' that we posed to all interviewees, the resounding response from prison officers, governors and prisoners was the provision of pastoral care - often to those in crisis – commonly in the form of a counselling or listening role:

I often think of [the prison chaplain] as the ears of the prison. You know, the part of the prison that is more or less purely there to listen to, rather than watch prisoners. I think we are the eyes and the hands, the governors the brain but the chaplains – they are the ears.'

(Prison Officer, 2010)

Similarly, when asked the same question most chaplains cited their pastoral work as more important than their explicitly religious statutory duties:

'If the prison service said to me 'the only thing you should be doing is the religious side of things on a Sunday' I think I'd quit prison chaplaincy as I think the pastoral work is, ironically, more deeply sacramental.'

(Prison Chaplain, 2010)

However, most prison chaplains, and some prison officers and governors, saw an attempt to divorce faith from pastoral care as deeply problematic; arguing that personal faith and a sense of a 'calling' motivated, informed and sustained the pastoral care chaplains provided:

'I wouldn't be here if I wasn't a Muslim and if I wasn't a Muslim, or other religious, I couldn't be a chaplain. I think my faith drives and shapes the care I provide these lads. It can't be a separate issue.'

(Prison Chaplain, 2010)

In that sense, the chaplain's religious tradition is implicitly the foundation and motivation for their pastoral work. For example, helping inmates to adjust to prison was often realised through 'spiritual counselling' and attendance at religious services. And attendance at religious services, even for those of no specific faith, was often identified as a deeply therapeutic activity:

'I think the chapel is good to give you some time out away from the situation in a different space to think and reassess. That is how it helped me, and a lot of the girls here who come. It wasn't like 'oh my God, God is here and has touched me' cause I don't believe in God but that the atmosphere was comfortable and I could, like, breathe...'

(Prisoner, 2010)

However, it is equally important to note that although many prisoners acknowledged, and indeed respected, the spiritual or religious motivations of the chaplains as important or central to chaplains, they often did not share them. The value many prisoners placed on the support service chaplaincy provides was more readily expressed in non-religious, and more widely humanitarian terms:

'Their most important role is just to make sure people like are okay and that, you know? Because, you know, there's people in here that self-harm and things like that, you know, and they ain't go no-one to talk to. You know, and this is what these people do, they're there, you know what I mean? No matter what background you're from they'll always be there to listen to you, and help, know what I mean?'
(Prisoner, 2010)

Therefore a key finding with regard to the distinctive role of the prison chaplain is that chaplain's perception of their role can differ noticeably from that of many prisoners who are often less sensitized to the chaplain's religious sensibilities; considering chaplaincy and the support it provides as a humanitarian, rather than spiritual or religious endeavour.

'I think the changing role of the chaplain could be seen as reflecting changes in the community in wider society in terms of less people attending Church, which is then reflected in our regime changes. I think there has been a change in mindset that has changed how we see, and consequently use prison chaplaincy.'
(Prison Governor, 2010)

This 'change in mindset' within wider society has impacted upon the role of the prison chaplain, who is now ministering in and to an institution which constructs its ethos and aims in largely secular terms. It therefore should be acknowledged that the majority of prisoners, who do not attend religious services, do not acknowledge the central role of the prison chaplain as inherently 'religious'. We should therefore be careful not to impose chaplains', and some prison staff's, interpretation of their role onto and over the prisoner's experience and their attempt to make sense of it for themselves.

Therefore, in order to recognise the various, and sometimes conflicting perceptions of the core role of the prison chaplain we suggest that the distinctive role of the prison chaplain is better understood from investigating the interplay of the wider pastoral and more obviously religious role; rather than an assessment of the individual impact or value of each. Indeed, our findings suggest that it is in listening to the conversation between these two key aspects of the chaplain's role that the particularity and distinctiveness of contemporary prison chaplaincy can be captured. Indeed, prison chaplains seem to make sense of chaplaincy, and thus their service, through the formation of a form of pastoral theology built around the interconnectedness of these two central facets of prison ministry:

'For me every day at the prison has become an act of worship and everything I do with the prisoners, and even staff, a part of that worship.'
(Prison Chaplain, 2010)

Interestingly, this implicit pastoral theology is also characterised by a change of perception of the explicitly religious or faith-based activities of the chaplain; shifting away from a perceived history of proselytising evangelicalism to a broader educational role, effected through the provision of voluntary religious education classes, often in the form of Koran, Bible or other key religious teachings.

'I think the prison chaplain has changed in that we are no longer here to preach or convert but to help them, to make them happier, to help solve their issues.'

(Prison Chaplain, 2010)

Further, it appears that honouring and respecting the religious and cultural plurality of the contemporary prison that the prison chaplains, and indeed other staff, goes hand in hand with being often highly sensitive to any suggestion of their proselytizing:

‘The chaplains of today are not here to judge or convert anyone, or anything like that, they are just here to talk to and give prisoners support.’

(Prison Governor, 2010)

However, although altered, the reformist or rehabilitative role of the chaplain endures. It now takes the shape of a less aggressive form of pro-social modelling, whereby, through their own performances and relationships, chaplains reflect back to the prison community a way of being and behaving that can be, hopefully, inspirational, educative and thus transformational:

‘One of the most powerful acts of faith I can be seen to do in this prison is walking on the wings, side by side with my Muslim colleague having a good laugh. That is very powerful and is interfaith dialogue in action.’

(Prison Chaplain, 2010)

Another particularly striking change in the role of the prison chaplain that was reported across constituent participant groups was the question of the status they are accorded. This was something that was commonly referred to throughout the research process; being perceived to have been diminished over the past two decades.

‘I suppose there is something about the role of faith in prisons not being as central as it once was; less governing governors being motivated by faith and thus the prominence of the chaplaincy reduced as a result of that.’

(Prison Governor, 2010)

‘Reduced’ often means that the prison chaplain is no longer a member of the prison senior management team, directly line managed by the governor; does not always sit on management committees. As a result, it is felt by some that their ability to influence the prison regime is diminished.

‘I think a Chaplain should have the ear of the highest authority in the jail because sometimes I think we need to be the one who calls to account and says “Hang on, what’s going on here?”’

(Chaplain, 2010)

However, it is important to add that many chaplains, often those new to the service, welcomed being separate from systems of prison management. This may result from having not experienced previous regimes or systems, but the difference is marked. It is also interesting to note how many chaplains viewed this ‘diminished authority’ as a benefit; allowing the chaplain to be perceived as a part of the prison workforce, and thus develop closer relationships with prison officers and prisoners on the wings, in essence the ‘frontline’ of daily prison life.

'I think it is good that we are not managers. I am here to sit with the man in pain, not on a management board discussing budgets or the diversity agenda. I am here to work the frontline, not the offices.'

(Prison Chaplain, 2010)

The final significant change to the role of the prison chaplain lies in the extension of the chaplain's role to that of advisors on, and, more recently, trainers in, the diversity agenda of the prison service.

'A change to the role of the chaplaincy recently has been pushing at the boundary of their role through using the chaplaincy team as more a kind of diversity and faith advisor, more and more we are stretching into a world where we use that information to feed into the security world'

(Prison Governor, 2010)

This has involved the chaplain being responsible for delivering training to prison staff about the various faiths and the respective observances and requirements of those faiths. This can be particularly useful for prison officers who, like the prison chaplain, find themselves operating in a multicultural, multi-faith environment that often tests the boundaries of their own cultural knowledge and understanding. Indeed the relationship between the prison chaplain and prison officer is interesting and, we suggest, an invaluable lens for developing an understanding of the unique role each plays within the contemporary England and Wales penal system.

3.3. A Prison Chaplain - Prison Officer Continuum

'The prison chaplain should never confuse their role with the role of the prison officer...that would be a fatal mistake.'
(Prisoner, 2010)

The role of the prison chaplain sits in an interesting and illuminating tension with that of the prison officer, and this became apparent quite early in the interviewing process. A high percentage of respondents seemed to find it difficult to discuss the role of the chaplain without using the role of the prison officer as a key point of reference. In that sense, through exploring the interaction and permeability of the two roles a deeper insight into the particularity of each can be provided.

When questioned about the distinctive role of the prison chaplain respondents across all groups commonly reported the importance of pastoral care and then made sense of the nature of that role through comparisons with the prison officer. This was characterised by two key responses (1) the chaplain should not confuse and thus contaminate their pastoral role with the disciplinary role of the officer and (2) the chaplain's role and standing as 'chaplain' accords them a 'neutrality', or 'independence' that is central to their ability to provide that pastoral care. This is a multi-faceted aspect of the chaplain's role, where neutrality/independence connects with: chaplains not having the same perceived 'authority' as a prison officer; their being able to relate in human way with prisoners; their being 'in-betweeners'; their having 'time' for people; and their being non-judgemental.

Prisoners, and several staff, commonly perceived the chaplain as not of the prison; as not an employee of the prison and thus not aligned with its discourse of control and discipline. This perception, however misguided, accords the chaplain a neutral status that seems central to their listening, pastoral role – a status prison officers, with their responsibility for control and security are not perceived to have.

'The most important role is that they [prison chaplains] are totally independent...they are kind of in-betweeners.'
(Prison Officer, 2010)

However, the prison chaplain is not totally independent and is, like the prison officer, a functionary of the prison service with a primary duty to promote the security and regime of the prison. However, this is not how they are perceived across the prison, and the independence that this perception affords them seems a distinctive aspect of their role and function within the prison. This creates opportunity for chaplains to respond to expectations and to:

- (1) Act as a prison pressure valve; listening, counselling and providing temporary sanctuary in the chapel space for those in various forms of crisis;
- (2) Act as the neutral, and neutralising agent, for the prison – de-escalating situations of tension and potential conflict
- (3) Act as a symbol of the outside world
- (4) Act as a monitor of extremism and radicalisation

Prisoners, and some prison staff, also made stark comparisons between the characters of the chaplain and prison officer, largely along the lines of the chaplains being 'kinder', more 'sympathetic' characters and thus more inclined and suited to

pastoral listening and counselling work. In these instances the role of each seemed to be interchangeable with personality; prison officers being harder and not very good at dealing with emotion and prison chaplains softer and not particularly effective at discipline and control.

'Prison officers are not there to put an arm around a crying prisoner; it is not what we are or what we do; it undermines our primary role in prison to ensure safety through the control and discipline of the regime. Let the chaplain be their friend; we can't afford friendships, and certainly can't afford to ever be seen as a 'soft touch'.
(Prison Officer, 2010)

Although clearly these represent stereotypes of each role, in that there are many officers who counsel and support, and chaplains who control and discipline; these mythologies of prison officer as the one who controls prisoners and the chaplain as the one who befriends them were commonly drawn on across participant groups, to make sense of each role. They therefore present as important tools for sustaining, shaping and understanding the particularity of each.

Prisoners declared a sense of partisanship with a prison chaplain that is not as readily expressed with prison officers. This may inevitably be due to the fact that the prison chaplain does not lock prisoners up; is more likely to say 'yes' than 'no' to a request, and thus naturally appears to be on their 'side'. The chaplain certainly seems to have more time to attend to the psychological, emotional well-being of the prisoner. Further, as they do not have the same responsibilities for delivering and sustaining the daily regime, chaplains are freed, in many ways, from the negative associations that delivering the regime generates.

In that sense the prison chaplain's role is often understood through the lens of the prison officer; what chaplains are was often defined by what they are not – prison officers. However, the two roles are permeable and that permeability seems to be being tested at present with the chaplain increasingly called on by the establishment to take on aspects of the officer's role. This is particularly the case where prison chaplains, particularly Muslim chaplains, become overly involved in policing the extremism-radicalisation agenda,

'We therefore have to use the role of the chaplain to kind of meet some of the political concerns and pressures prisons are currently facing. We just have to be careful how far we push as the lines that separate, that demarcate, those different roles. Losing that neutrality and losing that kind of professional role as a religious leader is a danger'
(Prison Governor, 2010)

The danger here is that should the prison service push too far the chaplain could lose the 'neutrality' that defines and colours their own role; and thus are in danger of becoming prison officers who are able to conduct religious services. In that sense it is important to be aware of the boundary lines that characterise each role and allow prison chaplains and prison officers to perform their particular duties across the prison. The image of the prison officer and prison chaplain working together to ensure the smooth running of the prison system is powerful; the one to administer and manage the machinery of the regime; the other to pour oil onto and lubricate the hot spots, tensions and cracks that appear within the penal mechanism. Chaplains'

and prison officers' ability to achieve this balance seems to ultimately depend upon the prison service being sensitive to the permeability of these two roles; thus working to respect and maintain the continuing distinctiveness of each.

Having now explored the distinctive role of the prison chaplain, we now move to an exploration of the particular value and contribution those various roles perform for the modern prison system.

3.4. (Re) Valuing the Contribution of the Prison Chaplain

'We live in a world of delivery and budgets and therefore give me the tangible, measurable and I am happy. I think it comes down to 'what KPT does the chaplaincy deliver?' That is very hard to quantify as it is the qualitative stuff that lies underneath that is important here and which we shouldn't dismiss.'

(Prison Governor, 2010)

The fundamental purpose, and consequent challenge, of this research has been to unearth the contribution prison chaplaincy makes to the contemporary prison service; an institution populated by large numbers of men and women who do not profess to have a faith or regularly attend religious services. As described above quantifying the 'value' of prison chaplaincy is problematic due to the inherently unquantifiable nature of an essentially qualitative role. For example, how can a key performance target (KPT) measure the number of suicides, self-harms or acts of violence a prison chaplain has prevented? It is therefore this 'backstage' prison activity that we now discuss that, unless deliberately looked for and at, commonly goes unacknowledged and becomes the subject of cliché, stereotype and myth.

Therefore, the only way of evaluating the contribution of the role of the prison chaplain is through engaging a qualitative methodological lens that involves talking with the men and women chaplains serve and work alongside and, where possible, observing chaplains at work. As a result of interviews and observations carried out over a 12 month period in a diverse range of prison establishments the fundamental finding of this research is that prison chaplaincy does make several key distinctive contributions to prison life – both in the day to day management of the prison regime, and the prisoner's and prison staff's experience of incarceration.

3.4.1. Prisoners

'I suppose at the end of the day this place and the chaplains make the prison a less painful place, you know, like there is less hurt as a result of them being here.'

(Prisoner, 2010)

As prison chaplaincy is primarily, though not exclusively, there to service the religious needs of the prisoner population it is their voices that we first turn to, in particular exploring the specific values prisoners placed in chaplaincy.

For the majority of prisoners interviewed and spoken with, regardless of whether they were of a particular faith or no faith, the overwhelming value of prison chaplaincy lay in its provision of a distinctive pastoral care and support service - particularly for those (a) in crisis and/or (b) suffering from some form of loss; whether that be loss of a connection with family, mourning a death or a more general struggle with their loss of liberty.

' I find that when I am at my lowest ebb or when I have situations that I am not comfortable speaking to the screws or cons about because of trust issues with cons and insensitivity with officers; I always know that there is someone in the chapel I can talk to.'

(Prisoner, 2010)

Although other support services are available from elsewhere within the prison, prisoners seemed to particularly value the chaplain as a counsellor, particularly as a result of the trust they felt they could place in them. This trust seemed to stem largely from the belief that the chaplain was an independent source of support – not aligned with rehabilitation, psychological evaluations or the prison regime in the way that listeners, prison officers and psychologists were.

Following pastoral care the provision of religious and spiritual support was cited as a core contribution of the prison chaplain. The accounts provided by respondents who valued this aspect of the chaplain's role differed depending upon the religious background - beliefs and practices of the individual. In order to make sense of these different experiences we have developed a typology of five distinct prisoner groups which reported valuing the religious/spiritual support provided by chaplaincy:

(A) **The Devout** - Prisoners who arrive in prison with a clear faith tradition that they continue to regularly practice.

'Well for me I came to prison a Christian so the first place I wanted to find solace was the chapel'

(B) **The Convert** - Prisoners who find a faith while in prison.

'I first got involved with the chaplaincy here while I was going through a rather, a bad stage with my mental health. One day one of the chaplains came down and he was talking to me about Jesus and I thought to myself 'what a load of crap' and I told him to leave me alone. So he did and left me a bible and I started reading it and one day something just clicked, and since then I have committed to being a Christian. When I come here I had nothing to do with faith at all.'

(C) **The Returner** - Prisoners who begin to reconnect with an earlier faith tradition from childhood, largely as a result of being in prison.

'Right, I was what I would call a Friday Muslim, where I'm just attending the Friday Muslim service once a week on the outside. And the reason why was because I was distracted, I couldn't resist the temptations...but when I come to prison, none of that's there and you seem to think to yourself 'What are you doing here?' and see your brothers getting their shit together with the help of the Imam and the other lads and want some of that.'

(D) **The Professional Seeker** – Prisoners loosely classifiable as agnostics who do not ascribe to a particular faith, but attended a wide range of services and most chaplaincy classes and events,

'I am not sure what I believe in but I am open to believing in something'

(E) **The opportunist** – Prisoners who openly claim not to be interested in faith or religion but value chaplaincy as a safe space; an escape from the wings.

'You don't have to necessarily believe in God to come here; to enjoy a service. It is a place for anyone to get away; enjoy some peace, sing a song or two and have a cuppa and a digestive.'

Regardless of whether devout or opportunist, when engaged in conversation a wide range of prisoners seem to value the religious and spiritual support provided by prison chaplaincy as an essentially human, and thus humanizing endeavour. It is important to remember that prison is for most prisoners an inherently dehumanizing space and experience; where choices are removed and thus pre-prison identities compromised and threatened. Asking to speak with the chaplain, or attending Sunday service, Friday prayers, a mid-week Buddhist meditation, or Sikh worship are choices that prisoners can make, and for many the assertion of that choice a powerful and valued event.

The final commonly expressed value of prison chaplaincy was its provision of an escape from the prison regime - in particular the prisoner's cell and the wings. This was expressed both in terms of the chaplaincy area as a safe, human or neutral space, and the figure of the chaplain as a safe confidant, largely as a result of their perceived neutrality, or independence.

'The chaplain, you know, they help me escape prison. Not just this prison but my own prison, you know? You can trust the chaplain, you know. Tell them stuff you wouldn't tell noone else.'

3.4.2. Prison Officers

Prison officers, like governors, seemed to value similar areas of contribution to prisoners, but from a slightly different perspective. The overwhelming value of the prison chaplain for the prison officer lay in their pastoral role – in particular the chaplain's availability and ability to do what was commonly described as the 'touchy-feely' stuff. Giving bad news, supporting men and women in crisis, providing a shoulder to cry on, essentially doing what some considered the 'dirty' or 'messy' prison work that lay beyond, or in conflict with their own role.

'Now officers, most of us, wouldn't look at a prisoner twice if we walked past one in the street whereas I think the chaplain would want to take them for coffee. I think a really good prison officer can signpost for a prisoner whereas even a mediocre chaplain tends to be able to share in and to an extent own another person's problem or worry, and that would be a considerable loss to the prison service.'

Prison officers also reported that the neutrality the chaplain's role was accorded in the prison bestowed an independent status that was very useful for 'gaining information' that they themselves as uniformed officers often found difficult to glean.

'For some reason I have seen these girls spill stuff to the chaplain in seconds that we have been trying to wheedle out of them for days'

This information is not always security related but may concern a prisoner's drug habit or involvement in, or knowledge of, some event in the prison. The prison chaplain was also reported as an increasingly important resource for information on matters of faith and culture, particularly in reference to Islam and other non-Western religions. Interestingly prison officers also reported that the prison chaplain was something of a reassuring symbol of the outside world, inside, and an important part of the prison landscape. When asked why this was important many officers struggled to explain why beyond the fact that they had always been there and their presence seemed to suggest a re-assuring continuity.

3.4.3. Prison Governors

'I value the chaplain as the person sat there who is not uniformed and thus doesn't appear a part of the system. Indeed any system! They are sat there with some degree of independence, I suppose.'

(Prison Governor, 2010)

As is evident in the above quotation prison governors valued many of the same contributions of the prison chaplain as those expressed by prisoners and, in particular prison officers. First, this took the form of an acknowledgement of the importance of meeting the statutory requirements of the Prison Rules (1999), through the provision of religious services but more important, for many, was the provision of a distinctive pastoral care and support service for both prisoners and staff.

'the majority of the chaplains offer a connection that many men find hard to resist and turn to that acceptance for more. I mean when you watch the men in chapel I am not convinced that many are engaging with the hymns and prayer but they are engaging with a belief that is giving them something when they had very little, or maybe nothing to define themselves by'

Some form of a reference to the neutrality of the prison chaplain was then unanimously followed by acknowledgement of their growing importance as advisors in diversity and faith related matters, and as sources of information on extremism and radicalization.

'it is fair to say that there are continual pressures as the Islam faith continues to grow and consequently grows in confidence to challenge the regime. The chaplains are an increasingly invaluable resource in monitoring, and keeping this in check.'

Although slightly different in terms used, governors also seemed to share the prison officers' valuing of the symbolic presence of the prison chaplain, though this was often expressed more as a symbol of morality and humanity, rather than of the outside world.

3.5. Chaplaincy as Counter-Cultural

*'Chaplains are in many ways apart from the prison; auditors of souls I suppose.
Though that separateness is both their strength and their weakness'
(Prison Chaplain, 2010)*

As attested to throughout this report the various roles, contributions and distinctive value of the prison chaplain seems to rest on a widely held perception that they hold a non-prison, independent, neutral status within prisons. The chaplain is not seen as a part of either the prison management or the regime, and is thus perceived as independent of the establishment. They are there to ameliorate the effects of, rather than impose the strictures of, the regime. Chaplaincy as a service within prison is therefore clearly identified as apart from, rather than aligned with, the discourses of control, discipline and punishment that characterize prison, and tend to be the causes of its greatest pains.

*'Well, you have got that trust factor there. They can build up a relationship with you that feels more equal, do you know what I mean, in a way that you can't with a prison officer as he is always the Boss, and there to control and punish you. The chaplains aren't there to do that; they are there to help.'
(Prisoner, 2010)*

This valued neutrality is interesting in that it is provided by a group of individuals with very specific, religious motivations, yet serving a largely secular organization and prisoner population. In that sense, it is important to remember that the neutral agents of the prison system are, in actuality, those with some of the more clearly defined ideological motivations and moral positions.

We therefore suggest that the distinctiveness of the service chaplaincy provides lies in the fact that it is perceived as dissociated from the discourses of the institution it serves, and as such is considered, and thus valued, as counter-cultural – countering many of the attendant pains of imprisonment. Whether those pains are born from a loss of liberty for the prisoner, a difficult or uncomfortable aspect of the prison officer's role or a regime-related problem the governor needs to attend to.

In that sense, the prison chaplain could be viewed as acting as a counter-cultural agent and tool of the contemporary prison service – employed by, yet in many ways set in opposition to many of its characteristic discourses. This frees the chaplain from being associated with the pain and loss of liberty of imprisonment, allowing them to maintain a unique, and somewhat distinctive position.

However, as the prison chaplain is an employed member of the prison service with an attendant and pressing responsibility to promote the security of the establishment this perception of them as independent, counter-cultural agents is partly institutional mythology. However, this is clearly a powerful and enduring myth - reported across all participant groups - that affords the chaplain a unique standing where they are able to do things other staff in the prison often find difficult.

So, prisoners imbue the chaplain with trust and turn to them to confide in and be counseled by; prison officers value them as their professional foils who essentially do the work they cannot, or don't want to do, and the governor seems to value the

independence of the chaplain as a useful resource for both diversity and security related matters. However, we would recommend caution in the blurring of the chaplain/prison officer roles in matters attaining to the extremism and radicalization agenda, as this could seriously undermine the neutrality of the prison chaplain that prison management seem to value so highly.

However, although clearly a distinctive value of prison chaplaincy for prisoners, prison officers and governors we suggest that this counter cultural position can be something of a poisoned chalice for prison chaplains and chaplaincy departments. Firstly, we suggest that there is a possible price to be paid for being perceived as apart from the prison – in particular an attendant invisibility – whereby the work of prison chaplaincy becomes a quiet background activity supplementing the ‘real’ work of the regime. This was evident from a common ‘I hadn’t really thought about them before’ response during interviewing and, at times, the reporting of poorly defined relationships with other prison departments and, sometimes, prison management.

‘I don’t think education even know where we are here and as for the psychologists! I do think we sometimes get forgotten and I have had to work hard to remind the management that we are a useful resource.’
(Prison Chaplain, 2010)

Feeding into, and possibly sustaining this notion of the chaplains as in some sense apart from prison culture was a widely held perception that prison chaplains were something of a weak link in terms of security. Prison officers and governors both reported that they felt chaplains would benefit from further training in security; feeling that chaplains were often not fully sensitive to its importance in the safe management of the prison.

‘I think the prison chaplains, however well-meaning, can be a little naive when it comes to security matters and forget that their chapel is actually part of a prison that houses some very dangerous men.’
(Prison Officer, 2010)

We suggest that this non-prison, neutral status also feeds into and colours prison chaplaincies’ own identity as a professional body. When asked about training, chaplains seem to either adopt an ‘oh, we just get on and do it’ approach and cite prior ministerial training as sufficient. Or they complain that the current training provision is not sufficient and/or suitable. There is no systematic programme of mentorship for supporting new chaplains and many of the new chaplains spoken with reported having learned their job ‘on the ground’. There seemed to be a feeling that chaplains’ pre-prison vocations and training were sufficient preparation for their role within the prison. However, prisons are very different to external communities and not all chaplains felt that the available training for prison chaplains was sufficient,

‘There doesn’t seem much training or development, and all people seem to do at the annual conference is moan.’
(Prison Chaplain, 2010)

As a community of professionals, chaplains also don’t seem to engage in research activity, and there is no professional journal. We would therefore suggest that prison chaplains and chaplaincy start to reflect on the nature of their neutrality; and ensure

that while nurturing and valuing this as a part of its distinctiveness, it is not allowed to become its sole defining, and in some cases limiting feature.

However, regardless of the above cautionary recommendation there is no doubt that the ability to counter prison culture is a particularly important and distinctive aspect of the role and value of prison chaplaincy; one that seems to have particular significance for both the management of the prison service, and the well-being of its staff and prisoners. The challenge for both the prison service and chaplaincy lies in being able to sustain that distinctive neutrality while fortifying prison chaplaincy as a visible and valued part of the professional workforce of the contemporary penal system, rather than solely as well-intentioned counsellors.

3.6. Chaplaincy as Safe Place

'the wings can be pretty ugly places and for many men, even those of no religious belief, this place is a God send – if you will pardon the pun!'
(Prisoner, 2010)

Another distinctive aspect of the contribution made by prison chaplaincy, reported across participant groups, was its provision of a relatively unique safe place within the prison. Importantly the devout, returners, converts, professional seekers and the eternally opportunistic all reported valuing the safety this place accorded. The safety of the prison chaplaincy space seemed to be related to its perceived non-prison status and the neutrality described earlier, plus its position away from the wings. Prisoners commonly saw it as separated and separate from the prison, and thus feeling like a pocket of outside life, inside.

It was also reported as commonly used by the particularly vulnerable in the prison – specifically self-harmers and those who struggled to acculturate themselves into prison life. In that sense the presence of this space is valuable in maintaining the safety of those feeling particularly vulnerable and consequently could be considered to play a role in reducing self-harm and violence.

Finding places to feel safe in prison is important, for staff and particularly prisoners. If prisoners don't have anywhere to feel safe then they are likely to react defensively and that can have dire consequences for the safety and security of the prison. Chaplaincy space seems to serve, very much like the chaplain, as a pressure valve where men and women can come to release tension – again important in a place full of attendant pressures and challenges. As one prison chaplain explained:

'I like to think that I take that safe, sacred space with me as I enter a prisoner's cell to tell him his mother has died, or on a particularly fractious wing.'

3.7. Chaplaincy as Multi-Faith

'I mean we work in a multi-faith environment and no-where else do you get as many faiths coming and working together. And when some of those faiths contradict one another then tensions are probably bound to come through, whether subconsciously or not. I think some might feel a bit vulnerable, that their faith is vulnerable within the team. Even that it may be under attack in some way'

(Prison Chaplain, 2010)

As mentioned earlier the prison is something of a cultural melting pot with a diversity of individuals and needs all constantly crying out to be met. In line with many of the recommendations called for by Beckford and Gilliat (1998) chaplaincy now better serves and reflects the needs of a multicultural community, and is thus an important symbol of and resource for the contemporary prison service and its populations.

However, although a multi-faith approach to prison chaplaincy now seems established in England and Wales and is widely valued, this is not without attendant tensions; particularly of an ecumenical (historically Anglican-Catholic-Free Church) and inter-faith nature. These tensions were repeatedly reported across all participant groups and thus require acknowledgement if prison chaplaincy is to develop as a multi-faith service provider.

'I think that the faiths probably fear being marginalized and so they'll come out fighting, scrapping - handbags! Then the poor governor has them sending e-mails complaining about each other and you just want to knock their heads together and say, "Grow up!" I often think that the prison chaplains sometimes need to pour a little of that calming lotion on themselves'

(Prison Governor, 2010)

As well as a generic tension born out of ecumenical teamwork, there is currently an on-going and widely reported unease within prisons around what is commonly described as the ascendancy of the Muslim faith in prisons, and the consequent status, and often resources, afforded to Muslim chaplains.

'I think the Muslim faith has a higher profile in every chaplaincy department than it ever has had and probably above all the other faiths, and I don't mind saying that. I think sometimes that primacy of one faith over the others can be quite testing'

(Prison Governor, 2010)

This was also widely reported by chaplains, who felt that Muslim chaplains were provided with a disproportionate amount of training, resources and attention,

'It does feel like the Muslim chaplain and faith are the real focus and concern of the prison service, and therefore seem to get every prayer mat they request. Of course, this is only right, but I do sometimes feel as a Christian a little ignored'

(Prison Chaplain, 2010)

This sentiment was not uncommon amongst chaplains and accompanied with those religious faiths perceived as minor, such as Pagan, Hindu or Sikh, feeling something of a new marginalized group within the multi-faith chaplaincy community. This was

commonly expressed in terms of hours available, access to resources and often not feeling part of the core chaplaincy team.

In departments with limited resources, working to serve a prisoner population with a diversifying range of faith traditions, the above tensions could be seen as somewhat inevitable. How the current chaplaincy attends to these tensions is a different matter, particularly in a climate where contraction rather than expansion of funding and subsequent resources is likely.

3.8. Faith Inside: Religion in Prisons

'We have entered a pastoral world of sorts that is wary of the religious or sacred and sometimes even uncomfortable with the language of conversion and religion.

Evangelical language is widely distrusted, don't you think?'

(Prison Officer, 2010)

Our findings suggest that faith does have an important role to play in prison beyond the provision of religious services, and support of observances for those who arrive in prison with a well established faith tradition and practice. A statistically small number of prisoners are reported as attending Sunday services, (although the proportion of prisoners attending is higher than percentages of the national population attending church; and Muslim Friday prayer attendance figures are quite high). Significantly higher numbers do report a faith, however, commonly Christian, at reception/induction and many of those who report as 'Nils' can often be still found in the chapel.

'I mean, although the number of people who have a faith may have declined; culturally there is this feeling that there is a time to do certain things; a time for repentance, a time for solace and I actually think most people in prison are aware that the chaplains are the people who can support you through those times'

(Prison Governor, 2010)

As described above we suggest that religion inside is more complicated than a believer-attendeo versus non-believer-non-attendeo dichotomy. Rather there is a range of more complex prisoner responses to faith and religion inside that are ripe for further, closer investigation. In particular the use made of the service by converts, returners and professional seekers. For these groups, faith, whether attending a religious service or religious study group, can help individuals adjust to prison; reflect upon and possibly change their behaviours and outlooks; create a regime for themselves within the regime; escape danger and feel a sense of protection and group belonging.

'When you are in prison you are locked up for some long stretches of time and I think it is a natural inclination for a man isolated from his world to look for God, to start to strive for something beyond himself.'

(Prisoner, 2010)

These experiences were consistently reported as being largely facilitated by incarceration itself, in that the individual has a lot of 'time', and in many ways often feels forced into asking existential questions; in particular about their life and its direction. In that sense the isolation inherent in incarceration seems to be closely linked with a pull towards some kind of spiritual or religious reflection that eases the pains of prison life. Even for those that do not 'believe', regularly practice, or choose to acknowledge a specific faith, they can find attending services, or chaplaincy courses, provides an escape and time for reflection that becomes a useful tool for navigating prison life.

4. Recommendations

The role of the prison chaplain has changed, and continues to change. We recommend that the prison service acknowledge this and consider the findings and recommendations of this report as a useful resource for future strategy.

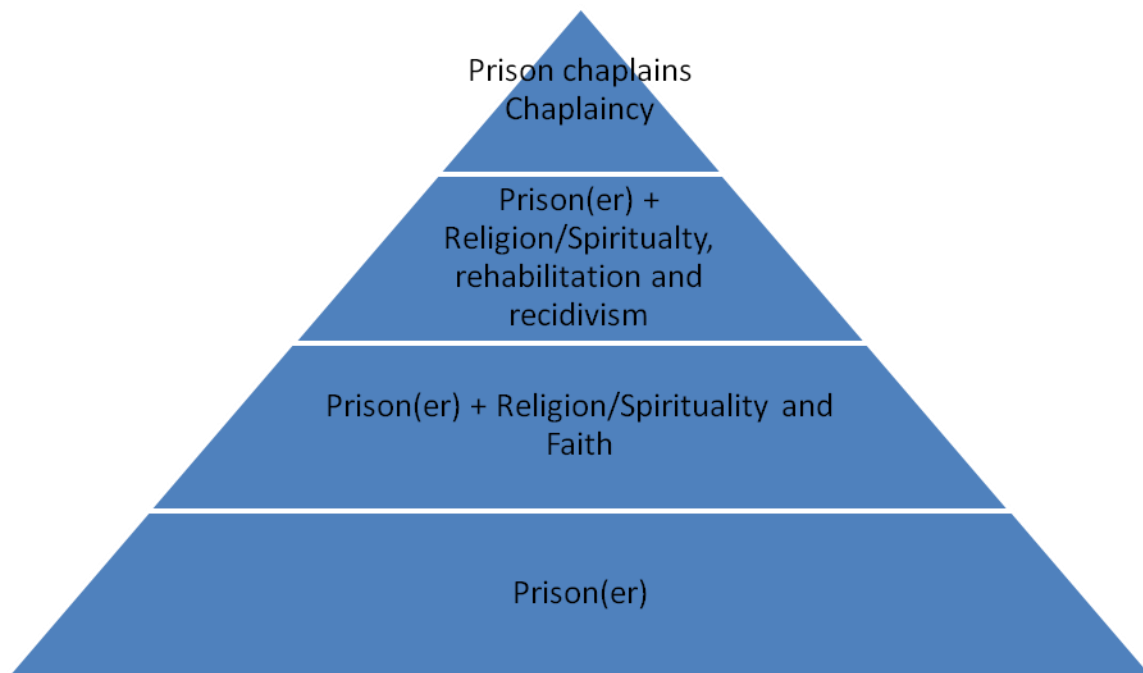
1. The findings show that a core value of chaplaincy lies in the provision of a distinctive humanitarian pastoral care especially for prisoners, but also for staff, which stems from the faith understandings of chaplains, rooted in the great spiritual traditions. We recommend that this informs plans for chaplaincy training and development, especially for the training received by new chaplains.
2. The research also showed that religion and faith have an important role to play in prison for a diverse range of men and women of various faiths, who are exploring faith, and indeed of no faith. We recommend that chaplaincy teams continue to explore how such faith practices, in addition to meeting the basic rights of prisoners to manifest religion, link with wider service practice, especially both pathways from offending and a desistance based approach to rehabilitation and resettlement.
3. We strongly suggest that while maintaining the distinctive neutrality that seems central to the role and value of prison chaplaincy the service is aware of the attendant invisibility that can accompany this. We recommend that both locally and nationally opportunities are found to celebrate the contribution of chaplaincy to establishments and wider aims within the Ministry of Justice.
4. The changing role of the prison chaplain requires further debate and consideration – in particular a review of current training, development and mentorship for new and experienced chaplains.
5. Prison chaplaincy appears to lack a strong connection with central infrastructure and appears more a collection of somewhat idiosyncratic franchises, often shaped by the character and innovations of the co-ordinating chaplain. We therefore recommend that, in order to create consistency and parity, the tension between creativity and consistency, and integration and distinctiveness be given due attention.
6. Our findings strongly affirm the progress made to develop multi-faith chaplaincy teams, while respecting the integrity of each faith tradition. The findings lead us to recommend that the service maintain awareness of the tensions, particularly ecumenical and inter-faith, and regarding the role of the Muslim chaplain in the light of the extremism agenda, and identify good models of teamwork and practice.
7. The extremism and radicalisation agenda has had a significant impact upon prison chaplaincy and we recommend that the service proceed with caution in this matter. In particular, ensuring that the distinctiveness of the role of the prison chaplain, which seems so widely valued across the prison, is not compromised by expectations of being a resource only to combat extremism.

8. We would encourage the service to acknowledge chaplaincy, including chapels and multi-faith rooms, as a 'safe place', and protect and respect the spaces that chaplaincy offers as a valuable resource within prisons for the support particularly of the vulnerable prisoner.
9. We recommend further research to investigate specialist chaplaincy activities alluded to by research participants but not prominent in the research data, particularly collaborative programmes involving chaplaincy and other services, such as those designed to promote restorative justice and 'through-the-gate' support for prisoners.

Appendix 1 Literature Review

1. Introduction

This literature review was carried out in preparation for the development of a set of interview questioning routes for the research, reported above, exploring the role and contribution of prison chaplaincy across England and Wales in a multi-faith context. This resulted in the discovery of a number of tiers of relevant research represented relationally below:



A small, encouraging yet slowly growing corpus of work exists, largely carried out across the United States, which explores the role and, to a lesser extent contribution/s of prison chaplains and chaplaincy services (Sundt & Cullen, 1998; Sundt & Cullen, 2008; Shaw, 1995; Beckford & Gilliat, 1998; Beckford, 1999; Gilliat-Ray, 2008; Hicks, 2008; Becci, 2010; Bledsoe, 1987; Dunscombe, 1992; Friedman, 2003; Halliday, 2008; Haussman, 2004; Jenkins et al, 2003; Malone, 2006; Opata, 2001; Van Denend, 2007).

This corpus is often not born from a stand-alone concern and/or interest in sociological, theological or anthropological explorations of chaplaincy as part of the penal system, rather it tends to feed into a slightly more developed and currently popular research focus concerned with exploring and establishing a relationship between prison, religion/faith/spirituality and rehabilitation and recidivism (Allard, 2009; Burnside et al, 2005; Camp et al, 2006; Carm, 2002; Clear et al, 2000; Clear & Sumter, 2002; Cullen et al, 2008; Dammer, 2002; Grimsrud, 2002; Hewitt, 2006; Johnson, 2004; Jensen and Gibbons, 2002; O'Connor, 2002; Sundt et al, 2002). It is, however, important to add here that a focus on rehabilitation and recidivism is not particular to chaplains/chaplaincy and is a shared, now well established discourse mapped onto, and consequently shaping, the provision of all aspects of prison(er) related services such as education (Tipton, 2009) in line with the over-arching recidivistic concerns of the Criminal Justice System, and in particular NOMS.

Evaluations of the efficacy of religion and religious based programmes to rehabilitate, not surprisingly sits within, while drawing from, a now well established tradition of research that explores the long history of relationships between prisons, prisoners and religion/faith/spirituality in more general terms (Dammer, 2002; Dix-Richardson, 2002; Fernander et al, 2005; Furseth, 2003; Grimshaw, 2003; Kerley, 2009; Marranci, 2009; Maruna et al, 2006; Qureshi, 2007; Spalek, 2002;2007; Spitale, 2001; Thomas & Zaitzow, 2006) . This makes an inevitable, albeit presently small contribution to the much wider paradigm of penology and its quest to better understand prisons and carceral experience, in particular through the qualitative lens of prison ethnography (Clemner, 1940; Sykes, 1958; Jacobs, 1974; Rhodes, 1998; Liebling,1999; Wacquant, 2002; Wilson, 1999, 2009; Bosworth, 2005). The following is a more detailed evaluation of the above bodies of work, followed by some preliminary conclusions drawn from the review of that material, which resulted in a set of initial questioning routes which shaped the interviews with prisoners, chaplains and other prison staff, reported above.

2. The Prison Chaplain: An Obscure Office?

***'The proposal of friends that I become chaplain of our State Prison at first struck me with much disfavor, from the idea that the position, instead of affording the encouragement and satisfaction attendant upon my former labors in schools and churches, must be up-hill work, and repulsive to the finer feelings of the heart. Still, having been no little accustomed to laying aside personal tastes and conveniences for the good of others, I yielded, and commenced the work on the first Sabbath in July, 1869.'* (Pierce, 1873:1)**

***'I was standing in the refectory kitchen talking with two parish priests with whom I lived at St. Pius Xth Church in nearby Loudonville. The telephone rang, and the young associate pastor answered it. As I learned afterwards, an angry voice at the other end yelled at him: "I'm gonna kill you, Mothah F-Kah!" Without answering a word, the young priest blanched and handed the receiver to me: "It's for you", he said. It was not the head of the Rosary Alter Society after all and, yes, he was right: it was for me. It is thus accepted that some of the demands of [prison] chaplaincy go beyond the rigors of day-to-day parish ministry.'* (Shaw, 1995:5)**

The vignette, as illustrated above, can often be particularly enlightening for the contemporary researcher interested in exposing and unpacking issues and themes that are particular to a specific role or identity, and thus, at times, transgress temporal, and consequently historical, socio-cultural boundaries. The main part of the corpus of work that explores role/s, and to a lesser extent contribution/s of prison chaplaincy tends towards (auto) biographical, descriptive vignettes, as included above, of the life and times of the prison chaplain (Clay, 1861; Pierce, 1873; Strickland, 1969; Bledsoe, 1987; Duncombe, 1992; Shaw, 1995; Van Denend, 1997). Although valuable sources regarding the role and subsequent experiences of the prison chaplain these are not analytical or systematic pieces of research into chaplaincy, rather they are the stories of prison chaplains, written by prison chaplains for a largely sympathetic reader.

In that sense work of this nature is limited to only one 'voice', which Carm (2002) is particularly critical of, that of the chaplain; and this is often, if not always, a very

particular voice – a male, white, Christian narration of his own or his colleagues experiences and evaluations of prison chaplaincy. Interesting exceptions include those provided by Van Denend, (1997) who provides a rare female perspective and Duncombe (1992) that of a chaplain-inmate – an even rarer occurrence, I presume, of a prison chaplain serving a sentence for political activism.

With the exception of Beckford & Gilliat (1998), Beckford, (1999; 2005) and more recently (Gilliat-Ray 2008) nearly all of the contemporary, post 1995 academic work into prison chaplaincy, particularly research published in peer reviewed journals has been born out of the United States. This is an important distinction to make as prison chaplaincy in the States, as identified by Beckford & Gilliat (1998) is a very different form of provision than that in the England and Wales. In particular in terms of the prison chaplains' growing role in educational/rehabilitative faith-based and non-faith based programmes.

Research conducted by Sundt and Cullen (1998) makes a particularly noteworthy contribution to the corpus of US chaplaincy research, having carried out a reasonably comprehensive exploration of the role of the prison chaplain, later focussing more specifically on their role in rehabilitation (Sundt et al, 2002) and attitudes to employment in prison (Sundt & Cullen, 2008). The first significant piece of research produced by Sundt and Cullen (1998) explored the role of the contemporary prison chaplain in some detail, citing Murphy (1956) and Shaw (1995) as instrumental, seminal pieces of research into prison chaplaincy.

Sundt and Cullen (1998:286) draw heavily from Murphy (1956), an unpublished doctoral thesis, in order to compare and contrast their own findings, revealing that little in terms of the core role of the prison chaplain (or what are referred to as statutory duties in England and Wales) has changed since 1956. However, the role of prison chaplain has been subject to several changes since 1998 thus calling for an exploration of: the changing role – both actual and suggested; and their changing relationships, as a consequence of their changing role, with other chaplains, prisoners and prison officers/staff.

Methodologically the above work is limited in that, following Dillman's (1978) total design method, and Shaw (1995) it depended upon the completion of a suite of questionnaires mailed to a randomly selected sample of 500 chaplains identified by the American Correctional Association. There was, therefore, no qualitative data collection - interviewing or ethnographic fieldwork conducted with prison chaplains, prisoners or other prison staff which makes for a less interesting, and arguably thinner data set. Hicks (2008) follows this methodological pattern collecting data from a succession of telephone interviews, attempting to add some qualitative depth to her study through spending time with prison chaplains, attending prison chaplaincy conferences and events.

Within their questionnaires Sundt & Cullen (1998), following Murphy (1956), invited chaplains to separately report and rank the respective importance of their daily activities. The top three ranking activities in both Murphy (1956) and Sundt and Cullen (1998) were the (1) counselling of inmates, (2) conducting religious services and (3) helping inmates to adjust to prison. Out of a ranking of ten activities the chaplains reported having to engage in, rather than value, the most significant

difference that presented was that contemporary chaplains spent more time on administration and working in educational programmes.

Sundt et al (2002) explored the prison chaplain's contribution to 'offender treatment programmes', essentially designed for the rehabilitation of the offender, discovering that most chaplains supported and indeed welcomed this developing aspect, and professionalization of their role. However, there appears a less favourable response to secularisation of the prison chaplain's role, specifically the growing importance of administrative duties which many felt detracted from the main purpose of prison chaplaincy - the provision of support, often through counselling, of the prisoner (Sundt & Cullen, 1998; Sundt & Dammer, 2002; Sundt and Cullen, 2008; Shaw, 1995; Hicks, 2008). This presents a possible tension between the growing 'secular' demands placed upon the prison chaplain and their over-arching 'sacred' or faith-based motivations and remit.

Shaw (1995) provides a useful, honest and at times amusing insight into the role of the chaplain in the United States penal system, in particular focusing on how the role impacts upon stress and well-being of the chaplain while addressing the crucial issue of the perception of 'others'. Although admirable, and unusual in that Shaw is a Catholic Priest rather than a Protestant Minister, Shaw as 'chaplain' is still controlling and positioning these other voices largely as cameos in support of his own. Sundt and Cullen (1998) once again follow Shaw (1995) in establishing something of a consensus regarding the identity problems inherent in the role of prison chaplains. In particular role confusion, ambiguity, isolation and secularisation which are taken up by Hicks' (2008) exploration of what she terms 'role fusion', born out of the need to align religious and rehabilitative, reformist ideologies (sacred) with those that are punitive focussing on control and management (secular), which ultimately characterise the prison estate.

There is certainly need for a more detailed and sustained exploration of the identity of prison chaplains across England and Wales, not only in terms of how chaplains perceive their own roles/selves, but also a sustained exploration of the perceptions and experiences of others. In particular, those who interact with the prison chaplain on a regular basis, such as visiting ministers/chaplains, prisoners and prison officers whose voices are currently largely absent from the work discussed above.

Within the UK this general paucity of research into prison chaplaincy persists, with a failure to respond to Beckford and Gilliat (1998) and their now seminal work questioning the primacy of the Church of England and Anglican chaplains in prison chaplaincy in spite of an increasingly multi-faith - non-Christian, even non-faith prison population. This has, however, resulted in a growing body of work that, rather than exploring prison chaplaincy from a multi-faith perspective, has shifted from a historical focus on Christian to the experience of Muslim prisoners (Spalek & El-Hassan, 2007; Qureshi, 2007; Beckford & Khosrokhavar, 2005; Marranci, 2009) with (Spalek & Wilson, 2001) and (Gilliat-Ray, 2008) addressing the role of Muslim prison chaplains. The experiences and voices of non-Christian, and now non-Muslim prison chaplains, visiting ministers, volunteers and particularly women remain still largely unreported and unexplored.

Indeed, research into prison chaplaincy to date tends to be somewhat denominationally fractured. It either explores prison chaplaincy from a Christian

tradition perspective or, as evidenced above, more recently from a Muslim perspective. There is no work to date exploring prison chaplaincy from a truly inclusive, cross-denominational, multi-faith perspective that draws together and includes the experiences and subsequent voices of Muslim, Church of England, Catholic, Quaker, Buddhist, Methodist, Sikh or Pagan as part of the same team delivering, in theory at least, the same service to the prison population. This is where this research project can make a valuable contribution in representing the diversity of a contemporary prison service chaplaincy that provides an inherently diverse yet coherent service to the prison population.

Encouragingly there is also a very small, but promising body of work developing across Europe exploring the work and role of prison chaplains and chaplaincy. Becci's (2010) exploration of the developments in prison chaplaincy in Eastern Germany and Furseth (2003) in Norway are both notable examples. However, beyond this the majority of work remains located within the USA and UK, notably two prominent Protestant Christian nations, which in many ways continues the concerns made by Beckford and Gilliat (1998) and will be taken up and explored throughout this study.

The review now moves onto a brief exposition of the corpus of work that explores, and through that investigation interestingly often attempts to construct, a direct link between participation in religion/religious programmes, rehabilitation and a reduction in rates of recidivism.

2. Believing we can? – Religion, Rehabilitation and Recidivism in Prisons

'...the provision of religious programming in the prison setting should not be contingent on the issue of programme effectiveness...first, regardless of social science findings, prisoners have a right to express their religious views...' (Sumter, 2006:525)

Supporting prisoners' rights to express their religious views, as articulated in the Prison Rules (1999) and Prison Service Order 4450, in England and Wales, is considered by most prison chaplains, not surprisingly, as the 'bread and butter' of their work but how that expression is facilitated by a prison chaplaincy team appears a far less homogenous response. In a climate of professional accountability, institutional surveillance, performance targets and indicators (Leibling, 2004) the production and evaluation of measurable outcomes for support services provided across the Criminal Justice System is standard, and chaplaincy is no exception. For most, if not all prison services measurements of efficacy, and consequent funding, are intimately tied into a reformist agenda. Chaplaincy departments have found themselves recast as *service providers*, thus the object of auditing measures, in particular those that evaluate the extent to which their work and/or interventions have a direct or measurable impact upon the *service user*, specifically in terms of recidivism.

'...the value of prison ministry came to be defined primarily by the extent to which it could advance central correctional goals as defined by the secular professionals administering the prison' (Sundt & Cullen, 1998:274).

The above, along with what Sundt et al (2002) refer to as a resurgence of interest in religious programming has resulted, predominantly, though not exclusively in the

United States, in the development of programmes of faith based intervention and rehabilitation, often, though not exclusively under the remit of restorative justice (Allard & Allard, 2009; Grimshaw & Sanchez, 2003).

This has been the genesis of a body of work that has, albeit tentatively, evaluated the respective efficacy of these programmes and discovered that participation improves institutional adjustment and, in some cases reduces recidivism (Hewitt, 2006; Johnson, 2004; O'Connor, 2002).

As is regularly the case the English and Welsh penal system is gradually following the American model with faith-based, or loosely faith-inspired programmes driven by chaplains and chaplaincy departments gradually being developed with some promising initial findings (Sherman & Strang, 2007). In terms of benchmarking (and therefore funding) chaplaincies are not expected to deliver interventions as part of their core activity - so therefore have to justify why they do anything beyond basic statutory duties, leaving restorative justice programmes like SORI often measured and evaluated as psychological programmes, and argued for on a business case basis each time they run. This raises interesting questions about the changing role of the prison chaplain in offender treatment and their professionalization and possible secularisation as another 'treatment team' within the penal system. This is interesting as prison chaplains now finds themselves realigned with the transformational, reformist ideologies the penal system was built upon - something of a (welcome?) movement full circle back to the hopes of Bentham, the Quakers penitentiary and the reform and transformation of the wrong-doer through spiritual and religious instruction and inspiration.

The above largely quantitative, often psycho-social evaluations of faith based programmes are not unsurprisingly located in a slightly wider corpus of work that has explored the relationship between prisons and religion/spirituality and faith more generally. Much of this work focuses on the role religion/faith can/does play in supporting prisoners in identity work (Kerley, 2009; Marranci, 2009) that enables them to cope with, navigate and adjust to the demands of prison life (Thomas & Zaitzow, 2006; Clear & Sumter, 2002), avoid confrontations with the regime and other prisoners/staff and ultimately re-integrate successfully into the wider community, thus avoiding re-offending post release (Clear et al, 2000).

Sundt et al (2002) argue that although prison chaplains have a well established history of playing a crucial part in the above processes they are now finding, to varying degrees, their selves and their roles realigned with and subsumed into the 'treatment enterprise' discourse. This inevitably has an impact upon not only how the prison chaplain perceives their own role and identity; but also on how those they serve (prisoners) and work with (prison staff) experience and consequently perceive them.

Finally, all of the above research conducted into chaplains, chaplaincy, religion/faith and rehabilitation/recidivism in prisons feeds into a wider, far more established and richer corpus of penology research that stretches across disciplines such as criminology, anthropology and sociology covering a wide range of topics and issues born out of the nature of, and subsequent demands of, incarceration. As the research reported here is a qualitative piece of research concerned with the 'voices' of a range of constituents found throughout prisons the project will therefore draw heavily from,

and hopefully make a valuable contribution to work carried out in this tradition, in particular ethnographic work conducted within and throughout the England and Wales and US prison system.

4. Preliminary Conclusions

In the light of the above the following preliminary conclusions were reached:

1. Apart from a relatively small corpus, as explored above, research into prison chaplains and chaplaincy is very limited, largely confined to the United States and often tied directly into rehabilitative discourses, in particular recidivism and Restorative Justice. This therefore supports the assertions made in section 1.1 of the MOJ tender bid (2008:6) that calls for 'formal research into the role and contribution of HMPS Chaplaincy'.

2. There is a distinct paucity of sustained qualitative, ethnographic research, carried out in England and Wales that explores the role and contribution of prison chaplains and chaplaincy service, from a multi-faith perspective, to the wider prison communities and Criminal Justice System. Most methodologies involved questionnaires and or heavily structured interviews conducted remotely, with few researchers conducting their research in prisons, let alone chaplaincy departments. This therefore supports the call for research that relies 'heavily on qualitative methods' made in section 3.2 of the MOJ tender bid (2008:8), establishing urgency for work that explores prison chaplaincy from and within the unique context it is inextricably born out of, shaped by and tied into – prison.

3. From the work that has been conducted, little, if any moves beyond a focus on exploring the experiences and consequent 'voices' of chaplains as either re-presented by the researcher or directly by the chaplain as researcher/respondent. With the exception of Spalek (2001) and Gilliat-Ray (2008) these are almost exclusively the voices of white, male Christian chaplains. The perceptions and experiences of prisoners, staff, in particular prison officers and prison management, such as governors, remain largely absent.

Where 'voices' are re-presented they rarely appear intact within research publications but are often summarised or rephrased, and consequently re-positioned by the researcher, thus undermining any genuine commitment to accommodating voice within the text. This supports the call made in section 3.2 of the MOJ tender document (2008:8) that calls for research that will 'capture the "voice" of offenders, staff and chaplains'.

4. Little, if any attention is paid to the experience of non-faith prisoners of the chaplaincy service with the small amount of research into prisoners' experiences of religion and/or religious programmes being confined to the religious convert or seeker. This echoes the call in section 2.3 and 3.5 of the MOJ tender document (2008:9) that outlines that 'one of these groups should be held with offenders who do not have a faith'.

5. Very little work exists that explores the experiences, or gives 'voice' to the non-Christian, and more recently non-Muslim 'visiting ministers' or chaplains often

employed part-time and/or on a voluntary basis, thus relocating while sustaining the inequalities identified by Beckford and Gilliat (1998) to other groups.

6. Apart from the personal reflections of prison chaplains there has been little, if any qualitative, ethnographic work that provides an insight into a chaplaincy department. How does it run? What are the internal relationships within? Roles, tensions? Demands? What are the external relationships between chaplaincy and other departments? How are chaplaincy departments structured? Chaplaincy needs to be mapped into, and as part of, the wider penal system and, rather than it often being conceptualised and subsequently explored through the lens of the standalone 'role' of chaplain, considered through the broader lens of a distinct 'chaplaincy' department.

7. There is yet no work exploring the perceptions of the general public, or non-chaplaincy colleagues from outside prison of prison chaplains and chaplaincy work/roles.

8. Women remain largely absent from all of the literature – particularly women chaplains, prisoners and prison officers. This significant imbalance needs urgent redress.

9. Although there is some work that explores roles, and to a lesser degree identity there is very little work that evaluates contributions of either individual chaplains or chaplaincies. In particular:

- Contributions of chaplains/chaplaincy to prisoners' experience of prison.
- Contributions of chaplains/chaplaincy to staffs' experience of prison as place of work.
- Contributions of chaplains/chaplaincy to prison service and wider Criminal Justice System.

All of the above nine points are the main preliminary areas that were presented from the review of existing literature as requiring investigation. Those that coincided with the specification provided by the National Offender Management Service were investigated through the research reported in this paper.

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