

2025 Chaplaincy Impact Survey: Interviews with those visited by chaplains

Summary of responses

1. Basic stats.

- 42 interviews were conducted in three locations (Redditch, Pershore, Kidderminster) with those interviewed regularly visited by 9 different chaplains.
- 75% work in the retail sector, with others in local government, property management, charities and professional services (dog grooming, shoe repair).
- Roles included employees 12 (29%), managers/supervisors 10 (24%), and Directors/Owners 20 (47%). The high percentage of the latter is a reflection of the large number of independent businesses in Pershore, and that the chaplains in Kidderminster exclusively visit market traders.
- All but a few of the workplaces where interviewees worked employed only a few people (1 – 4 people).
- The length of time those interviewed had spent in the particular business (or something similar) ranged from 1 to 48 years, with the average c. 13 years.
- Stats on the demographics of those interviewed were collected. The cohort were:
 - 69% Female; 31% male
 - 86% white; 9% Asian/Asian British; Other/Preferred not to say (5%)
 - Age band:

<25yrs.	0%
25 – 45 yrs.	24%
45 – 65 yrs	64%
65 yrs +	12%
 - Asked whether they would describe themselves as a person of a particular faith 50% said No; 36% Christian or named a particular denomination; 5% other faith (1 Muslim, 1 Sikh), and 7% (3 people) preferred not to say.

2. Their experience of being visited by Chaplains.

Asked how sensitive chaplains were and whether they engaged only when appropriate, all respondents (100%) said chaplains were very sensitive in how they. (scoring 5 out of 5)

Asked to describe in their own words how they understood the purpose of chaplaincy, and experience it, responses included:

a. Those who described and experienced chaplaincy in terms of the welfare of workers through listening and engaging.

60% of respondents spoke about chaplaincy in this way, stressing:

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| • <i>Friendliness</i> | • <i>Approachable</i> |
| • <i>Listening ear</i> | • <i>Interested [in the business].</i> |
| • <i>care</i> | • <i>Kindness</i> |
| • <i>someone to talk to about problems</i> | • <i>Empathetic</i> |
| • <i>Showing concern and asking how I am</i> | • <i>Conscientious</i> |

Quotes from respondents include:

- *Someone to talk to if I have problems - and offer help.*
- *Asks how things are, and the business going and talks about how the town is doing.*
- *Makes sure everyone is OK. Any problem we can tell her, and also tell her about other people who need her help. She is always there for us.*
- *Friendly face. Approachable. Easy to talk to. Is a support from outside the business.*
- *Walking angel. Checks on health and well-being when no one else does. In retail this doesn't happen. The Public forget the human side of it. Support from managers is OK in the business compared to other retailers I have worked for.*
- *Someone to talk to about anything. [The chaplain] is there often at just the right time, when someone needs to talk, but does not realise it. For volunteers [in a charity shop] who are older, they can be lonely and having someone to off load to is useful.*
- *Outside support, Someone I can talk to. Always there to listen.*
- *Support, community, Listening ear.*
- *Very friendly, kind people. They ask if I am OK and how the business is doing.*
- *Provides a listening ear which is confidential, non-judgemental and supportive, and through this sustains the wellbeing of staff. Where necessary provides a considered response to what people tell [the chaplain].*

b. Chaplaincy as part of the community and building links between businesses

15% of respondents spoke about chaplaincy in this way, with comments such as:

- *A community thing, which is unique. No one else does this. Nice chat, the chaplain speaks to everybody, and is knowledgeable about what is going on in the town with other traders*
- *Keeps us in touch with the rest of the High Street, and find out from the chaplain about other businesses, which helps us as a community of businesses. The chaplain is knowledgeable about the town.*
- *Representative of local church and community. Friendly face. Christian Presence*

c. Comments where respondents mentioned religion

- *Offering support. I like that [the chaplains] do not push religion, but that we can talk about our different points of view. They treat me with respect and make good connections.*
- *Friendly, have a chat. They don't force religion on me, but are interested in me and my son. We talk about life. Familiar face and friendly.*
- *Friendly and polite. They are good listeners and very helpful, helping me think things through. We can also talk about religious subjects.*

d. Other comments

- *I see chaplaincy in the same way I sees Church. 'I believe in God; not in the church'.*
- *Don't know. It seems like a good idea [after the interviewer had explained]*
- *No concept of what chaplaincy is, and have not spoken to anyone before.*
- *Never had it explained, but once had a good chat with [the chaplain who visited].*
- *No idea. Not a church person. Had not felt the need to connect, but happy the chaplain comes, as long as they do not stop the work.*

3. Did they find conversations with the chaplain useful, and to give examples of this.

62% of respondents made a positive comment, 20% a more neutral response, saying it was not something that they were likely to engage with in any depth, and 18% were negative.

a. Positive responses, mostly around having someone to listen confidentially.

These can be about personal issues, and/or work.

Personal Issues

- *Yes. When I faced a bad time in my life I was able to speak to the chaplain for a long time. She listened and was fantastic.*
- *Yes. Helped with mental health problems, putting me at my ease. It is good to know that someone is there. Have been to funerals [the chaplain] has taken and she was brilliant.*
- *Yes. Talking about a friend who died of cancer recently aged 48. I could talk about that [with the chaplain]. I really needed to talk about it, but didn't realise that until I did. Also, I am often on my own so it is nice to see a friendly face. It cheers me up.*
- *Yes. I talk about my friends who are seriously unwell, and the chaplains take this seriously. I am grateful they pray for them [my friends]. What they do is good.*
- *Yes. I have had health problems, and we have spoken about this.*
- *Yes. The chaplain invited me to church, and I went a few times, especially when I was going through hard times, when my father died. The chaplain was someone to listen. They connected with me and formed a real relationship..*
- *Yes. Talked to [the chaplain] about my personal situation [at the time of the] illness and death of my husband (MND) and illness of my daughter. Useful as an independent listening ear.*

Work issues

- *Yes. She listens to me if people are annoying me - including customers who can be very vocal. [The chaplain] 'talks me out of it', and helps me voice the issues I have.*
- *Absolutely. I always remember one Christmas, when customers tend to be ruder and work is stressful, I was having a worst of days ever. The Chaplain arrived to listen, empathise, as a human act of kindness. My day improved immediately; stress stopped, like a reset, and put things in perspective, and made it feel worthwhile. It was the kindest thing someone could have done at that moment.*
- *Conversations with the chaplain fill me in on what is going on elsewhere. It is a chance to talk about work-life, social life and concerns about staff.*
- *Yes. An outside perspective helps to give me a different way of seeing things. It helps that the [chaplain] is a complete outsider.*
- *Yes, useful. Having spent 6 months in hospital, and suffered mental illness, and had to give up work. Later I started in a completely different type of work as a volunteer and am now employed. The conversation with [the chaplain] at a crucial moment was Comforting, Inspirational, transformational. She listened to what I had to say. Very comfortable taking with her.*
- *I am usually busy. Conversations have been useful, and are likely to be more so in the future as lots of uncertainties about the business*
- *Yes. [the chaplain] knows me, not as a friend, but someone I can trust. I let off steam and know he is listening, and gives good advice. It is hard to do this with colleagues. It is very useful to have someone who understands the work and can comment confidentially.*

b. More general positive comments.

- *Someone to moan at and a good thing.*
- *Friendly, warm, welcoming, kind, supportive.*

- *Very approachable. I am always too busy, but I am glad they come.*
- *General chat. Lovely people*
- *Good conversations, on current affairs (News), politics and philosophy*
- *Yes, asking how I am doing. A friendly chat. Pleased that chaplain visits*
- *Yes. [The Chaplain] is easy to talk to. She asks how things are going and has a nice nature.*
- *Yes. She is a lovely person and we like to see her.*

c. Neutral responses

- *It is nice to chat, but I have never needed to talk about problems.*
- *I wouldn't talk about any problems I have, but that is my character anyhow.*
- *Not had a lot of conversations with the chaplain, but happy that she visits.*
- *Just in passing. I am so busy I don't have time to talk.*
- *Myself, no. I just have not needed to offload, but might if needed. It is something good to have.*
- *The chaplain is nice, but not something I need. It is a lovely thing to do, and useful as social interaction, chatting about the town, and what is going on elsewhere - like a coffee morning. Can see there are more needy people, who would benefit more. 'Could she use her time better' by helping them?*

d. Negative responses

- *Waste of time that the Chaplain comes*
- *[Chaplaincy] does not suit me as an idea as I do not like being asked how I am and wouldn't open up to a stranger, or anyone.*
- *I find it slightly awkward. As I don't know [the chaplain] well enough he wouldn't be my first point of contact if I had something troubling me. I would need to know him better first.*
- *Do not understand the idea of chaplaincy*
- *Not best person to ask. I am not religious*

4. Interviewees were asked for any ideas about changes that would make chaplaincy more effective.

About 50% of respondents had a suggestion to make. Listed by theme ideas suggested were:

a. Times and frequency of visits

The least busy days are Monday or Tuesday mornings, café's would prefer people coming early in the morning. Because there are many part-time workers, or workers on zero hours contracts, visiting on different days, and at weekends, would mean more people would see the chaplain. When visiting make sure the chaplain speaks to everyone – not just the manager.

Quotes included:

- *Frequency is OK. We don't want it too often as we have things to do.*
- *I would be pleased if they could come more often.*
- *Change nothing. I like being surprised when the chaplain turns up. I wouldn't want to have prior notice.*
- *If they [chaplains] did not come I would miss them.*
- *As a café there are very busy times of the day. Best to come earlier in the morning, and avoid lunchtime.*

b. Publicity about the chaplaincy

To make the chaplain more accessible have a poster, with the chaplain's photo and contact details, in the staff break area. This would help part-time and weekend workers have access to chaplains. It would also help busy workplaces where it is difficult to have a confidential conversation as people could arrange to speak to the chaplain on their terms, and at a time and place which they would be comfortable with.

Quotes included:

- *Contact info for the chaplain displayed in the staff room, on a poster or via a leaflet. We have two part-timers, who have never met her.*
- *The office is not a confidential environment, so it would be better to advertise the service, via a poster for example, or a leaflet. And anyone who would like a chat could arrange it at a suitable time and place. It would be better this way in this sort of place.*
- *Posters would be useful, to put in the breakout area, especially if they begin to employ others eventually.*

c. Other suggestions

- *It would be useful if, as well as the chaplain asking how I am, she would pass on news about what is happening in the community and church*
- *It feels one sided - we take, and the chaplain gives. Could schedule a chat, but it works well as something ad hoc. The Chaplains give a lot.*
- *One different idea could be to host a group of chaplains and help them understand what the business is all about and the stresses and pressures that we face. (as part of their training). Be happy to help with that.*
- *Need to have it explained why they are here*
- *Need younger chaplains.*

5. Finally, people were asked if there was anything else about the chaplaincy they would like to add.

Comments were wide ranging and difficult to categorise, but are worth including here.

- *Amazed that they remember everyone's names.*
- *Human kindness means the world, and staff would benefit from talking to a chaplain, even though they don't realise they need someone to come and listen. It is only when it happens that they realise the benefit of it. We all do life so quickly we forget to talk to each other. Chaplains are Counter-cultural in this.*
- *[Chaplaincy] is a really good idea, and I am glad Kingfisher support it. It is so nice to have a chat about the state of the world, and makes my day.*
- *For a while I thought the chaplain was provided by the [Company], and didn't at first know about FWW.*
- *The chaplains are lovely people, have a sense of humour, are great listeners, really care and are non-judgemental. This is unlike some other church people who condemn me because of my beliefs. I have a lot of time for them, and we share good hugs.*
- *They're perfect!*