

31 May 2020


Dear Member,

During this unprecedented time of the COVID-19 pandemic, chaplaincy teams across Northern Ireland have given a great witness of quickly developing new ways to continue attending to the spiritual and pastoral needs of patients, staff and their families. It has been very edifying to hear of chaplains contacting one another and sharing ideas of good practice and resources.

As a means to document this amazing response, the NIHCA Executive will seek to gather evidence of chaplaincy responses to the pandemic for future reference and to aid the development of a more unified approach that would be an evidence-based model which could be proposed for implementation across all Trusts/Sites or at a regional level, in the event of a second COVID-19 surge or similar crisis in the future. All responses will be collated and anonymised by the NIHCA, and its findings will be shared with the Chief Nursing Officer and NIHCA members.

For this project to have legitimacy, it is essential to have the greatest possible number of completed questionnaires; hence, you may wish to share this questionnaire with other chaplains on your site who may not yet be members of the NIHCA. I would ask you to please respond by email to secretary@nihca.co.uk by **Tuesday, 30 June 2020**. The questionnaire should be self-explanatory. However, should anyone have any queries please do not hesitate to contact us at the above email.

Yours sincerely,



Fr Robert Sloan
President



Professor Charlotte McArdle
Chief Nursing Officer

Further information:

Why is the questionnaire being conducted?

We (NIHCA) want to gain a greater understanding of the role of chaplains across Northern Ireland during the Covid-19 pandemic. We want to identify good practices and share insights with NIHCA members. We want to compose a set of evidence-based guidelines to be recommended to Trusts, Hospices, and regional departments on the role chaplaincy should play during any future healthcare crisis response and improve the outcomes for all who work within chaplaincy and for those who normally receive the benefit of our services.

Why have you been asked to participate?

You have been asked to participate because you are a member of the NIHCA or because you are active in healthcare chaplaincy in Northern Ireland.

Is your participation anonymous, confidential and voluntary?

This questionnaire is voluntary; you should not feel coerced into completing it. As the questionnaire is anonymised, neither denominational leaders nor employers will know if you chose to take part. Data will be analysed on a regional basis and not be site specific. We will not attempt to capture information that you do not voluntarily provide (e.g. IP addresses).

Because the questionnaire is anonymous, once you have completed and submitted it, you will not be able to withdraw the information you provided.

How long will it take?

Completing the questionnaire should take you no more than 20-30 minutes.

What happens to the results of the questionnaire?

A sub-group of the Executive will analyse the results of the questionnaires and write an initial report to be presented to the Chief Nursing Officer, for future pandemic planning, and will be disseminated throughout the membership for the next Annual General Meeting.

We hope that these initial results will help inform and improve practice, as stated above. Results may be applied in other contexts including further academic research for higher degree studies and, therefore, may later appear in peer-reviewed academic journals, periodicals and other media.

What are the benefits of taking part?

One of the aims of the questionnaire is to improve how chaplaincy is integrated into the total strategy of a response during a healthcare crisis or another pandemic scenario. Your contribution may well help and inspire others in their chaplaincy and in regional responses.

Are there risks in taking part?

It is possible some of the questions may cause distress as you recall a difficult period. Please be reassured that you are under no obligation to adapt your practice to new ideas being presented.

What do you do if you feel distressed?

If you feel distressed during or after completing the survey, you may wish to avail of some of the listening services of your local Church or by means of chaplaincy supervision. Enquiries may be directed to secretary@nicha.co.uk. You may also wish to avail of professional counselling in your local area.

Privacy Notice

To maintain anonymity, only the responses of your questionnaire will be sent by the Secretary to those of the sub-group of the Executive, who will collate them. All original emails will be deleted immediately and the questionnaires themselves will be deleted once the results have been gathered from them. The sub-group will not have access, at any time, to respondents' names.