

Hospice Chaplaincy

Lesley Gould, Reader at St Mary's Gravesend

and member of Chaplaincy team at the Ellenor Hospice

I have been on the Chaplaincy team at the Hospice in Northfleet for a few years....and I truly believe it's the place where God still wants me to be.....it's a job that has its challenges.....it's a job that has its great rewards.....it's a job where I meet such wonderful people.....people who are there for symptom control.....pain relief.....respite so their families can have a well-earned break.....or for EOL care



But whatever reason they are there.....they have the best care there is....they have access to the best medical care/physiotherapist/chiroprapist/counsellors/a hair dresser (very important) whatever they need it is done for them & it's free.....and at 11-30 a drinks trolley is taken to every patient, and they are offered a drink, brandy, whiskey, sherry, wine, whatever they would like.....the people who pour the drinks are not trained bar staff, they free pour, have you seen a half pint of sherry.

When I visit a patient for the first time.....I don't like to think it's a Chaplain & a patient talking.....I like to think its 2 people having a conversation, neighbours talking over the garden fence getting to know each other.....becoming friends.....building up a trust between us.....being open & honest with each other

All through my training as a PA/Reader then Chaplaincy training, I was told "don't get too emotionally involved with patients", but if you have a heart beating in your chest.....how can I not get involved, when patients share their stories with me.....share their families with me.....share their lives, their inner most thoughts/feelings/hopes/fears & dreams for their families and themselves

My job is to offer emotional & spiritual support to patients & their families to listen to their concerns & worries....to have big ears & small mouth....to be available to pray with & for them, to bring bedside HC to patients & their families, to journey with them to a peaceful death, sometimes to officiate at the funeral....and that makes it personal and makes the journey complete

Not everyone is pleased to see Chaplaincy, I have been sworn at & punched, some people get very angry, angry at the fact they are dying, angry because they have to leave their families when they're not ready, I also know it's not me their angry at..... it's who I represent, and I know God is definitely in that place.