

# SPOTLIGHT **“When we get healthcare right, we are among the angels”**

**A spotlight on UHD’s chaplaincy services, by James Taylor, lead chaplain.**

**“This September I became UHD’s lead chaplain, stepping into the shoes of much-loved colleagues going back several decades...”**

“I became a Christian minister in the Church of England in 2017. When my family moved to Poole in 2020 during the pandemic, I joined the team, and have got more involved ever since.

**“Chaplaincy is a very responsive service.** If all is relatively quiet, we’ll be out and about on the wards and in the public areas of the hospital. If anybody needs spiritual, religious, or pastoral support, then we are there to care for them.

**“So many people receive life-changing news, or life-changing developments can occur in our hospitals.** Calling the chaplain is something that can really help someone when an enormous weight has been dropped on them - we’re all trying to help people process and cope with the new situation they have found themselves in.

**“We support the maternity team around baby loss, and serve patients and staff as leaders in ritual, times of memorial, or celebration.**

We are called upon times of trauma to join our staff on the spot. We want to better support bereaved staff. We are on various boards and committees, and we’re currently receiving more referrals from the psychiatry liaison team and the carer support service.

**“If you aren’t well in yourself, then there’s a limit to how much help you can be to others.**

You don’t want to be in ‘compassion fatigue’. In the NHS we have a strong tradition of fixing things, whether it is a broken leg or arm, or a difficulty that we can address with medication, treatment, or surgery.

That leaves us feeling exposed when we encounter situations that we can’t fix. And as you move around the hospital and talk with patients and staff, you realise how many things all of

us face which are not fixable, and I think this is where chaplaincy comes to the fore. It’s about the human spirit. It’s at that time that we tap into more ultimate resources such as religion, philosophy, ritual - the deep truth about who we really are.

**“Like so many of us, as chaplains we get a lot of energy from what we do.** Very rare is it in a day when we’ve not been able to help someone. All the chaplains would agree that we get a lot out of our work. That said, we must take care of each other.

**“When we get healthcare right, we are among the angels.** To be a bit like an angel for somebody, and then to be remembered in that way, sometimes for many years, is hugely rewarding.

**“What I really like about Christmas is that it is still a widely shared time of celebration... and although we differ across the community in terms of our attitudes and beliefs, a Christmas celebration is something that nearly all of us feel able to join in with. I think we do really need these communal celebrations so that people feel like they matter to us, and that we matter to them. That’s one of the things I really do love about Christmas time.”**

