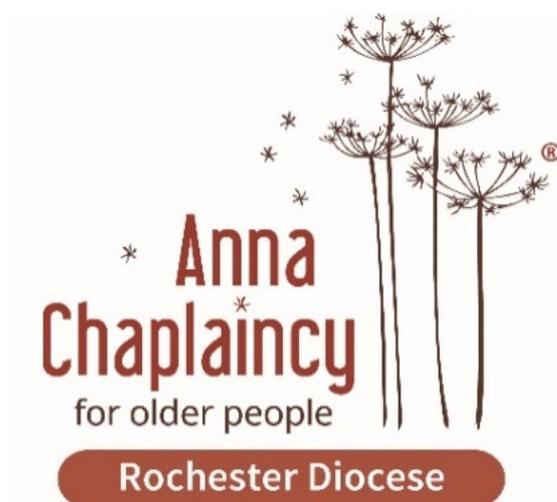


# Anna Chaplaincy in Kent, Bromley and Bexley in 2020

## Report on Responses to a Review Questionnaire



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## Executive Summary

In April 2020 a questionnaire was sent to Anna Chaplains and Anna Friends in Rochester Diocese. Responses from 42 individuals (71% of those to whom it was sent) painted a rich picture of their work offering spiritual care to older people.

### Key Findings

On average 32 older people are supported in each parish through Anna Chaplaincy, 48% of whom are not members of the church.

Anna Chaplains and Anna Friends fulfil a broad range of roles, with two thirds visiting older people in their own homes and half leading worship in care homes.

Their conversations with older people centre most commonly on their families and their past lives, with health, faith and worries also cropping up often.

Anna Chaplains and Anna Friends believe the primary benefit of their role is enabling older people to feel loved and cared about. Also vital is giving them a sense of belonging.

New ministry roles of Anna Chaplain and Anna Friend have given those in ministry with older people a sense of belonging and connection with others in the role.

Regular opportunities to meet with other Anna Chaplains and Anna Friends in local hubs are vital in giving a sense of belonging, a space to share with others who understand.

There is a thirst within the Anna Chaplaincy team for a broad range of training. Preferred ways to learn are through relevant short courses and reading books and articles.

Self-care is recognised as vital, given an acknowledged risk of becoming over-burdened, but the team have good strategies for looking after their own health and wellbeing.

Only 15% of respondents felt spiritual needs of older people were well met in their parish. Many areas for development were identified, and a pressing need to grow the team.

Anna Chaplaincy has responded flexibly and with great energy in the context of Covid-19. Team members are keen to continue new approaches as we look to the future.

## Who responded to the questionnaire?

In April 2020, three years after the first Anna Chaplains and Anna Friends were commissioned in Rochester Diocese, a questionnaire was sent to 59 members of the team (appendix 1). It was returned by 42 people, 22 Anna Friends and 20 Anna Chaplains, giving a response rate of 71%. The aim of the review was to gather information about the impact of this new ministry with older people and ideas for offering support and training.

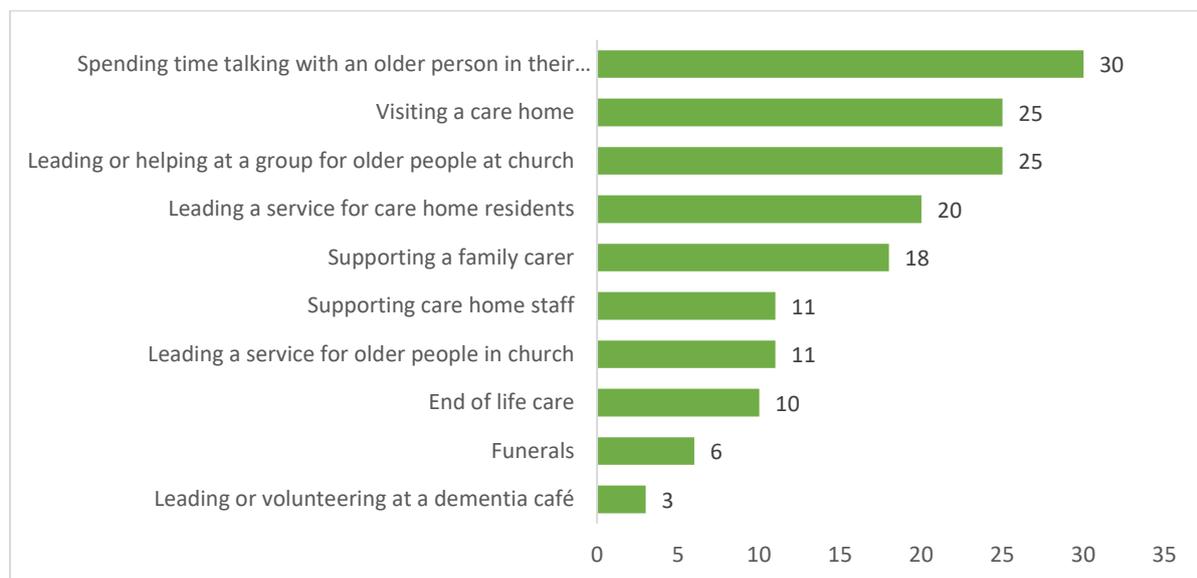
## What respondents said about Anna Chaplaincy in their parishes

### How many older people in your parish have monthly Anna Chaplaincy contact?

There was a wide range of responses to this question, from 1 person to 100. The average number of people was 32. Five respondents said Anna Chaplaincy reached more than 80 people. Where numbers were high, this tended to indicate the team led services in several care homes. This represents a huge amount of spiritual care across Rochester Diocese, given that it is provided almost entirely by volunteers.

### Which of the following are regular parts of your ministry?

We asked Anna Chaplains and Anna Friends what they do. Roles are listed below, the most common first, and how many said they fulfilled this role:

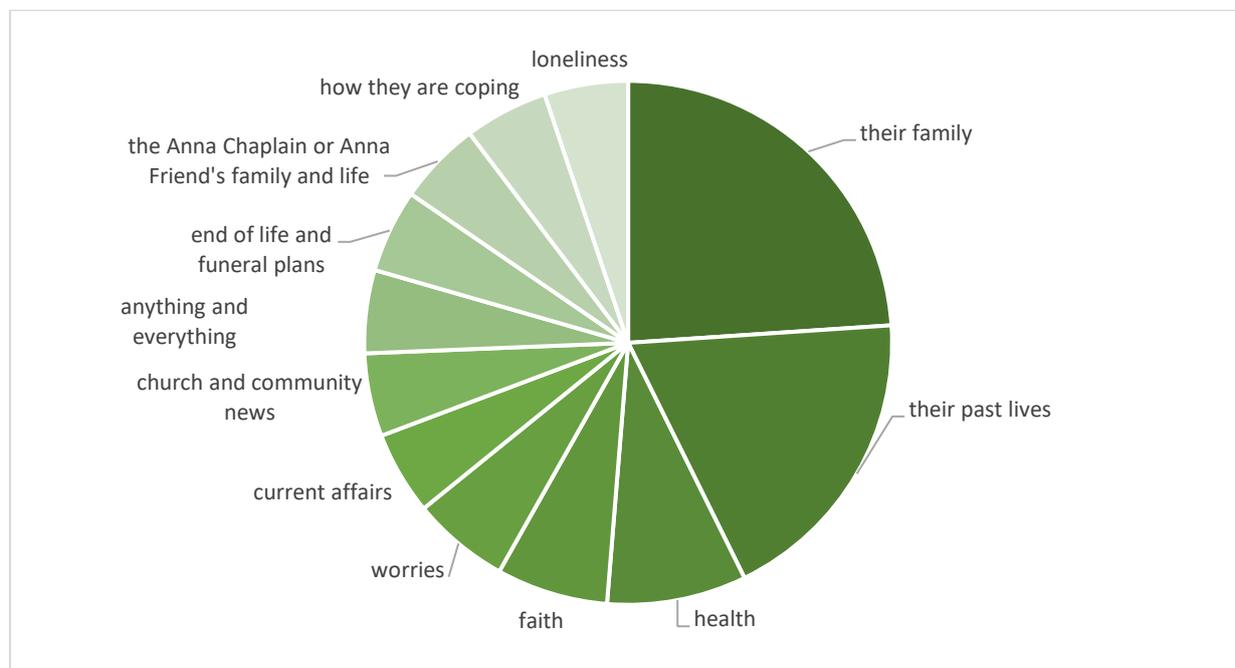


Other roles were mentioned: bereavement ministry; raising awareness of dementia; supporting older people at a Farmers' Market; being part of a singing group for people with dementia; running an art group in a care home; being an advocate for older people and people with dementia; phone calls and text support; promoting Anna Chaplaincy at deanery, diocesan, and general synod; writing articles about Anna Chaplaincy for parish magazine and preaching about it; leading services at a neuro-rehab hospital; supporting visitors to the Cathedral who have dementia.

Anna Chaplains and Anna Friends each work in ways suited to the needs in their parish and their own gifting, which explains the range of contributions made. The needs of

older people vary from parish to parish – some parishes have several care homes, others have none. Some parishes have populations that are much older than is the case for others. The list of ‘other roles’ demonstrates the energy and versatility in the team, the willingness to take initiative in responding to local needs and raising awareness of older people’s issues. Support is available to older people, whatever their circumstances.

What do the older people you support want to talk about with you? What are the most common topics of conversation?



Anna Chaplaincy is primarily about spiritual accompaniment, being alongside the older person and listening actively to their story, helping them make sense of it.

It was fascinating to learn about conversations Anna Friends and Anna Chaplains have with older people. There was a clear leader – 28 said that older people wanted to talk to them about their family. Another 22 said they liked to talk about their past lives. Less commonly discussed was health (mentioned by 10), faith (mentioned by 8), and worries (mentioned by 7). Topics mentioned by 5 or 6 people were: current affairs; church and community news; ‘anything and everything’; end of life and funeral plans; the Anna Chaplain or Anna Friend’s family and life; how they are coping; loneliness.

*“Stories about their past and present lives (e.g. childhood, family, work, interests and hobbies). Joys and consolations of age – e.g. satisfactions, contentments of daily life and long friendships; challenges of illness or frailty, adapting to change and missing lost loved ones and friends, sense of being cut off. Experiences of faith – e.g. sense of assurance (or desire for reassurance) re God’s love, or questions about where God is in their experiences, desire for forgiveness, of peace with past.”*

*“Anything and everything! They like to talk about themselves and their lives but are also interested in what is going on in my life.”*

*“Their health and mobility issues. Sometimes death and dying, their funeral wishes and who they want to conduct the services. How Jesus can comfort and give them the ability to cope. Isolation and how this can be overcome in a positive way. Particularly as we are at present in lockdown, how they can access our parish services online and by telephone for those who do not have internet access.”*

*“Most often wanting to be treated as they always were, i.e. not seen as no longer a ‘valid’ member of (church) community, just as important and having their particular needs attended to. They wish to be valued and given as much time as anyone else, and to be assured. Carers want support, advice and to be able to ‘unload’ constantly.”*

Being entrusted with these conversations is a privilege and a responsibility for Anna Chaplains and Anna Friends. Some things they hear are sad and difficult, others require wisdom and sensitivity. Building trusting relationships that enable the person to open up about their concerns takes time and commitment. Communication skills and active listening are vital ‘tools of the trade’ in helping the person as they work through some of the spiritual tasks of ageing. Looking back over your life and reconciling with the past are key tasks with which Anna Chaplaincy can help.

## What difference does Anna Chaplaincy make to older people in your parish?

We asked those completing the questionnaire to give ticks to indicate which of the statements listed they agreed with – 3 ticks being strong agreement, 2 or 1 less strong. Several respondents said that they felt we should be posing this question to the older people they helped. All the options we offered were felt to be important but the one most strongly supported was ‘older people feel loved and cared about’, with 97 ticks. Below is the list, ranked in order of popularity.



Given that Anna Chaplaincy is about spiritual care, it was interesting that helping older people grow in faith and find meaning ranked last. This perhaps reflects the fact that Anna Chaplaincy is offered to those of strong, little or no faith.

Relationships of trust and mutual respect must be built before deeper questions of faith and meaning can be broached.

The statements about enabling and empowering older people (giving them a voice and helping them contribute) also seemed of less importance, yet these are underpinning Anna Chaplaincy values.

These areas of responsibility will continue to be explored in our theological reflection on later life theology and spirituality of ageing, as we meet regularly for training and local support.

## Anna Chaplaincy Training and Support

What do you most value about being an Anna Chaplain or Anna Friend?

Respondents were asked to rank what they most valued about being an Anna Chaplain or Anna Friend. These are the options, ranked in order of popularity, with the element most valued listed first:

1	I feel connected to a network of people involved in older people's ministry
2	I can meet with other people who minister alongside older people
3	There are people to whom I can turn for advice and guidance
4	I am offered training and opportunities to develop my skills
5	My ministry is recognised and valued by my church and diocese

All the suggested benefits of being part of the Anna Chaplaincy team were valued, with several saying it was difficult to put them in order as they were all significant. There was variety in how individuals ranked benefits, which showed differing motivations. It is clear that Anna Chaplaincy fulfils an important role in bringing together those who minister among older people, for mutual encouragement and support.

Respondents listed several other reasons they valued being on the team:

*“It was difficult to order these as they are all valuable. Meeting with others is really important, which is why I value the annual networking conference.”*

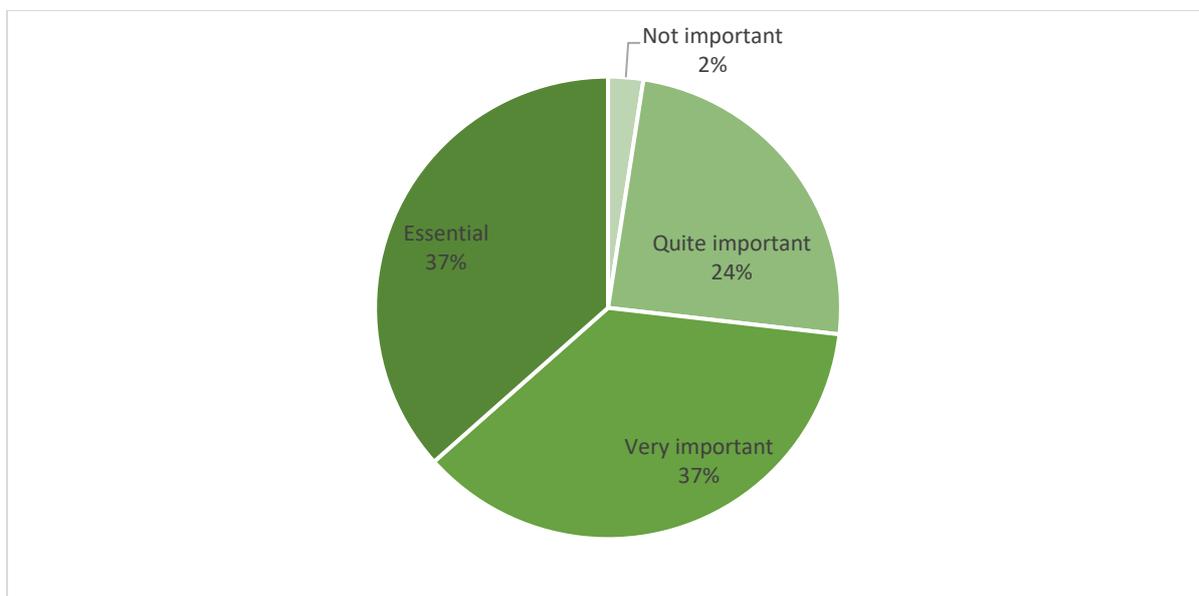
*“Helps me to prioritise (and when to say no) and gives focus to my ministry.”*

*“I love working alongside older people, including those living with dementia. It is a privilege taking part/conducting funerals of older friends.”*

## Is attending local Anna Chaplaincy hub meetings important for you?

In Rochester Dioceses, Anna Chaplains and Anna Friends gather in local groups (spanning several deaneries) four times a year, facilitated by the Anna Chaplaincy lead or a lead Anna Chaplain. Meetings are an opportunity to learn about and support one another's ministry, to pray together and reflect theologically on our vocation to minister alongside older people. Meetings are optional but are well attended and follow a loose agenda designed through a process of consultation with the team. Team members take turns in hosting meetings, so that we can visit each other's parishes.

Those who completed the questionnaire were asked how important hub meetings were and replied as follows:



This demonstrates how important hub meetings are to most members of the team. It has been a key factor in helping people develop a sense of identity as a chaplain with older people.

## What do you value about the hub?

We asked what members of the team valued about attending hub meetings. With the most valued element listed at a top, here is how they ranked elements:

1	Feeling part of a wider group – sense of belonging to a team with shared mission
2	Hearing news and ideas from Anna Chaplaincy colleagues in other parishes
3	Opportunities to learn and reflect theologically about ministry with older people
4	Friendship and support
5	Knowing colleagues are praying and supporting my ministry

Several said it was difficult to rank these elements, that they were of equal value. This was reflected in the scoring, with only small differences between items listed.

These responses reinforced answers to the question about what team members value about being an Anna Friend or Anna Chaplain. The sense of belonging to a team and linking with others in different parishes is a clear benefit and motivation.

## Hubs meet four times a year. Is this about the right frequency?

When asked about frequency of meetings, nine out of ten said that hubs meeting quarterly is about right. Four felt three meetings a year would be sufficient, and one suggested having occasional meetings via Zoom, and this has happened since the beginning of lockdown, with the majority joining sessions.

## Are there training topics you would find useful in developing your confidence and understanding in offering spiritual care to older people?

Many and diverse areas of training were requested, most topics mentioned by only one or two people, making it difficult to plan a programme of learning. It was possible, however, to group topics into several broader areas:

**End of life care** – which could include: bereavement support; theology of late dementia; how we as chaplains cope with the loss of people we support.

**Prayer and worship and spiritual care with older people and those with dementia** – which could include: ways to make Bible readings accessible to all; prayer ministry; care home liturgy; Godly Play; running a service for people with dementia; Communion for people with dementia; prayer ministry; communicating deeper issues.

**Understanding ageing and dementia** – which could include: spirituality of ageing; awareness of dementia; communicating with people with dementia; how older people see themselves; working with family carers; domestic abuse and dementia; creating social activities.

**Team and partnership working** – which could include: working with clergy; building a team; the relationship between Anna Chaplaincy and pastoral care; awareness of partnership with other agencies; care system awareness.

Another suggestion was as much about ways of learning as specific topics – *‘learning from others with more experience.’*

Almost all these topics have been included in training offered to the team over the last few years. They are central areas of skill and knowledge in ministry among older people.

Our learning philosophy in Anna Chaplaincy is that we grow and develop our understanding of spiritual care in later life continually, that we never reach a point where we know enough. Each older person helps us discover new truths about later life and we reflect constantly on the relationships we are building.

### How do you learn best?

There was a clear preference for attending half-day or one-day courses on relevant topics as a way of learning; 27 people ranked this their favourite way to learn. Reading books and articles was the next most popular way to learn. By comparison, online learning and courses that are longer with a placement and written work were ranked most liked by only a handful of respondents (1 person and 4 people respectively). The fact that many Anna Chaplains and Anna Friends are retirement age was reflected in comments made about difficulty, for instance, getting to training venues, especially at night. Another said – *‘Actually, I learn mostly from doing.’*

It was good to hear that the pattern established for learning within the Diocese fits the preferences of the team. We will continue to offer short courses and book reviews. We will also explore the potential for virtual learning, having found Anna Chaplains and Anna Friends amenable to meeting via Zoom during lockdown. For those who are new to Anna Chaplaincy, this could form part of their introduction to ministry with older people.

It is likely the virtual training will entail several 90-minute tutorials covering key topics related to chaplaincy among older people, with reading and relevant tasks to complete between sessions; we will invite guest tutors to talk about their experiences, including those with a lived experience of dementia. We will cover the learning outcomes that form the basis of the module currently taken by licensed lay ministry students. During the pandemic, placement opportunities are limited; instead we will ask learners to interview older people about their lives and spiritual journeys.

Working with vulnerable older people can be emotionally demanding. How do you look after yourself so that you don't run the risk of being overwhelmed?

It was reassuring to find full and clear answers to this question on self-care. Strategies could be grouped under several headings:

- ✓ **Giving it to God** - prayer, worship, solitude, daily routines of worship and reflection, spending time quietly with God, setting aside time for retreats, asking God for strength and guidance
- ✓ **Sharing with others** - support from ministry colleagues or spiritual director with whom to share the burden and offload, support from friends and family
- ✓ **'Me time'** – hobbies and interests (e.g. gardening, music, reading novels, sport, embroidery), time set aside for rest, country walks and holidays, spending time with grandchildren
- ✓ **Setting boundaries and practising good time management** – self-awareness, not taking on too many commitments

Team members form deep and lasting bonds with older people they support, meaning it can be difficult to 'switch off' and set aside troubling aspects of the stories they hear. During this period of reduced contact, due to the pandemic, they worry constantly about the older people with whom they are linked. There is great need for chaplaincy among older people, and a sense that more could be done (as we will see later in the report).

It is good to know that respondents recognise the danger they may become over-stretched. Wisdom is expressed in their strategies for taking care of themselves. It points up the need to make explicit the importance of self-care in training and support.

*"I am fortunate to have good friends who are also Anna Friends/Chaplains and we offer each other mutual support. Also I am very wary of taking on too many commitments as I know from experience it can take its toll."*

*"It can be a bit overwhelming but we do talk and share with each other and our team, though we do not really receive support from our church. The Anna Chaplaincy hub meetings are also a good source of support. I spend time with the Lord in reflection, thanks and prayers and in his word, I find that helps, especially the psalms."*

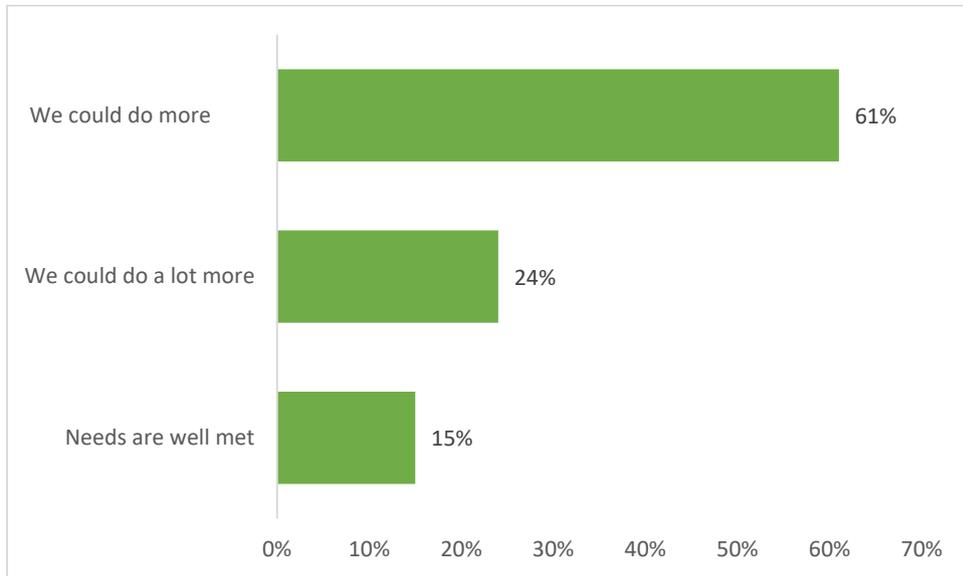
*"I have a spiritual director who I meet with regularly, also clergy colleagues I can share with. But find it difficult to have boundaries and protect time off."*

*"Reflecting on situations and experiences with pastoral supervisor and on joy and consolations of work and life with spiritual director. Creating clear boundaries around time and responsibilities. Learning to set aside or commit to God the work of the day each evening. Making time for recreation, exercise, sleep and relationships outside of work."*

## Extending the Reach of Anna Chaplaincy in Your Parish

How well do you feel the spiritual needs of older people in your parish are met?

We asked respondents whether or not they felt spiritual needs of older people in their parish were met sufficiently and received a clear indication that more could be done, from the answers given:



If parishes which have Anna Chaplaincy are felt to be falling short of what older people need in terms of spiritual care, what might that tell us about parishes that have not appointed a specialist older person's worker? If needs are well met in only 15% of parishes, there are many older people in our communities who lack spiritual care.

If you had more time, or more Anna Chaplaincy team members, what would you like to do that is not possible at the moment? What are the unmet needs?

Answers to this question about unmet need conveyed the message that Anna Chaplaincy has made a positive start in Rochester Diocese, but there is scope to expand its reach and remit. Key areas identified for increasing spiritual care for older people were:

Establish dementia inclusive services at church - e.g. Messy Vintage	Reach more older people not attached to our church – but how to find them?	Visit older people in their own homes more – including taking Holy Communion
Greater involvement in care homes – more services, befriending between visits	Set up a dementia friendly café group	Offer chaplaincy in other groups for older people – e.g. day care centres
Set up groups for older people – social or spiritual focus, Holiday at Home	Link with other local churches	Raise church’s awareness of older people/dementia – Celebration of Age service
Do more to support family carers and professional carers	Be more intentional and organised supporting older people so no one is forgotten	Be more creative in approaches – using sport, music art etc.

*“We need to do more to reach out to/meet the needs of those who are not members of the church community – the difficulty is identifying them and establishing what their needs are.”*

*“Spending more one to one time with individuals so that their specific interests and concerns can be addressed in a quiet environment. Unmet needs – time, people, space to do this.”*

*“Visiting care home residents weekly for a friendly chat. Establishing some spiritual support for care home staff.”*

*“I would like to see dementia friendly services in our parish but above all I would like to see work with older people fully recognised. I feel at the moment that they are overlooked.”*

*“An annual service to celebrate age. Some specifically dementia friendly events. More regular and consistent support to family and professional carers – possibly a drop in for carers. Encouraging home groups with older people to consider the specific needs or to have occasional quiet days specifically focusing on the needs of older people.”*

*“I would like to offer training to all members of the PCC. It would be great to work towards making our church and parish dementia friendly.”*

While it is encouraging to see Anna Chaplains and Anna Friends are aware of unmet need and potential responses in their parish, there is a danger of individuals becoming over stretched and reaching a point of exhaustion. Finding new volunteers is essential if we are to continue to grow and diversify in what we offer older people. Anna Chaplains and Anna Friends are dedicated in their ministry, often spending several days each week in role. It is neither fair nor feasible for them to take on additional responsibility responding to unmet need.

**What percentage roughly of Anna Chaplaincy ministry would you estimate is spent alongside older people who are not members of the church?**

This question was answered by around three quarters of those who completed the questionnaire. There was a large range in their answers, from 1% to 100%, but on average respondents said that 48% of their ministry was with people who are not members of their church. Those giving the highest percentages tended to be among the respondents who were active in care home ministry.

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***48% of their ministry was with people who are not members of their church***

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It is encouraging to see that Anna Chaplaincy is allowing parishes to reach out to older people who have not engaged previously in church life. The balance between ministry with church members and non-church members reflects the aim of Anna Chaplaincy to provide spiritual care to older people of strong, little or no faith. Through the care and support of Anna Chaplains and Anna Friends, we have seen older people becoming more involved in church life, joining other groups in church and attending Sunday worship. Though not intentionally evangelistic in approach, Anna Chaplaincy is allowing older people to discover faith for the first time or reconnect with the Christianity of their early years.

## Postscript – closing thoughts from respondents

Respondents had many additional reflections which they gave when asked in the final question for any other thoughts, a selection of which are below. These comments give a sense of us having made a good start through Anna Chaplaincy in addressing spiritual care in our parishes, but that much remains to be done, with plenty of opportunities identified.

Many reflected on the impact of the pandemic on their ministry, and the way in which it had broadened and deepened their contacts with older people. Given that older people are at greatest risk from Covid-19, we will need to work together to further develop our innovations in remote ministry.

*“I see this as a very important ministry and it is so enlightened for its development as a separate ministry. I think it makes older people feel particularly valued, that it has a name!”*

*“Covid 19 has meant I’ve not been able to visit people in their homes but in fact have been able to contact people by telephone. It has been interesting that many have opened up a lot more on the telephone than when I’ve visited them in their homes.”*

*“Covid 19 has opened up many more deliberate and frequent lines of communication with all older people (especially those totally isolated and alone) that our church is in contact with through cards and letters, phone calls, email and even Zoom. Covid 19 is making us think and act VERY differently, laterally and imaginatively!”*

*“The current crisis has definitely enhanced and brought new opportunities for this ministry. It would be useful to think further around reaching those unable to use the internet; perhaps the younger generation can be used to set them up for the future.”*

*“It has been really good to be involved with this ministry since it was thought about in Rochester Diocese and to have seen it grow and spread.”*

*“Our local hub is very Anglican and we have not thought about talking to our Churches Together groups.”*

*“I have had several discussions with people outside the Church who feel that an Anna Chaplain/Friend should have a symbol of recognition they can wear i.e. a badge or brooch”.*

*“It appears to me that we are still struggling to get recognition for our work with the older generation. I feel the church only concerns itself with youth work which is important but this reflects the attitude that society has to the older generation at this particular time.”*

## Appendix Anna Chaplaincy Review – Rochester Diocese 2020

### About you

1. How long have you been involved in older people's ministry? .... years
2. How long have you been involved in Anna Chaplaincy? .... years
3. Are you an Anna Chaplain or Anna Friend (circle or underline correct answer)?

Anna Friend      Anna Chaplain

### Anna Chaplaincy in Your Parish

4. **How many older people in the parish have monthly Anna Chaplaincy contact?**

Rough estimate of number of people supported each month: .....

5. **Which of the following are regular parts of your ministry?** (Tick any that apply.)

- a. Spending time talking with an older person in their home, including praying with them or sharing Holy Communion
- b. Supporting a family carer
- c. Leading or helping at a group for older people at church
- d. Visiting a care home
- e. Leading a service for older people in church
- f. Leading a service for care home residents
- g. Supporting care home staff
- h. End of life care
- i. Other:

6. **What do the older people you support want to talk about with you? What are the most common topics of conversation?**

7. **What difference does Anna Chaplaincy make to older people in your parish?**

– mark each 0, 1, 2, or 3 ticks √, √√, √√√ (3 ticks = strongest positive option)

- i. Gives older people we reach a sense of belonging
- ii. Older people feel loved and cared about
- iii. Helps older people grow in faith and/or helps older people find meaning
- iv. Helps us as a church understand the needs of older people
- v. Helps us as a church value older people
- vi. Gives a voice to older people
- vii. Ensures older people who are frail do not slip through the net
- viii. Helps older people continue to contribute to church and community

### Anna Chaplaincy Training and Support

8. **What do you most value about being an Anna Chaplain or Anna Friend?**

(List in priority order, 1 being most valued)

I am offered training and opportunities to develop my skills

My ministry is recognised and valued by my church and diocese

I can meet with other people who minister alongside older people

I feel connected to a network of people involved in older people's ministry  
There are people to whom I can turn for advice and guidance  
Other reason -

**9. Is attending local Anna Chaplaincy hub meetings important for you?**

(Underline or circle the correct answer)

Not important    Quite important    Very important    Essential

**10. What do you value about the hub?** (List in priority order, 1 being most valued.)

Hearing news and ideas from Anna Chaplaincy colleagues in other parishes  
Opportunities to learn and reflect theologically about ministry with older people  
Friendship and support  
Feeling part of a wider group – sense of belonging to a team with shared mission  
Knowing colleagues are praying and supporting my ministry

**11. Hubs meet four times a year. Is this about the right frequency?** (Underline one.)

I would like my hub to meet less often  
I would like my hub to meet more frequently  
Four times a year is about right

**12. Are there training topics you would find useful in developing your confidence and understanding in offering spiritual care to older people?**

**13. How do you learn best?** (List in priority order, 1 being the way you learn best.)

Reading books and articles  
Online courses  
Attending half-day/one-day courses on relevant topics  
Courses that are longer with placements and/or written work

**14. Working with vulnerable older people can be emotionally demanding. How do you look after yourself so that you don't run the risk of being overwhelmed?**

**Extending the Reach of Anna Chaplaincy in Your Parish**

**15. How well do you feel the spiritual needs of older people in your parish are met?**

(Circle or underline one answer.)

Needs are well met                      We could do more                      We could do a lot more

**16. If you had more time, or more Anna Chaplaincy team members, what would you like to do that is not possible at the moment? What are the unmet needs?**

**17. What percentage roughly of Anna Chaplaincy ministry would you estimate is spent alongside older people who are not members of the church?**

..... %

**18. Any other thoughts**



Anna Chaplaincy is part of The Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF). It is a community-based network that supports older people and their carers wherever they may be – in residential care, in congregations, in their own homes and in the community. To find out more, visit [annachaplaincy.org.uk](http://annachaplaincy.org.uk).

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