

Joint Working Protocol for Prison Chaplains

Protocol in respect of the endorsement and support services for Free Church Prison Chaplains working with 'Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service' (HMPPS)

BACKGROUND

Free Churches Group (FCG) has a responsibility under the HMPPS statutory requirements for Prison chaplains to endorse and support Free Church chaplains. To fulfil that responsibility, the Secretary for Prison Chaplaincy (FCG) needs to carry out certain functions which require a good working relationship with the respective Free Church denomination and their chaplains.

The denomination requirements will be assessed for denominations joining the FCG as part of the membership application process. Free Church denominations who rely on membership of CTE and Cytûn must be listed on the 'Additional Denomination' list and demonstrate they meet the following requirements, in line with members of FCG.

AIM OF THE PROTOCOL

To set out the process and requirements for a denomination to meet so that FCG endorsement and support of Free Church chaplains can be effectively carried out to meet the requirements of HMPPS and the needs of respective chaplains.

DENOMINATION REQUIREMENTS

A denomination must either be a member of FCG or listed on the 'Additional Denomination' list.

1. FCG requires Group members (denominations) to have an effective accreditation and accountability system for ministry, which is considered as part of the application process for membership of FCG. Group members have the privilege of being able to encourage applications for chaplaincy posts in HMPPS. Suitable candidates for chaplain posts have the benefit of the endorsement of FCG and receive the necessary support from FCG's specialist staff.
2. A denomination on the 'Additional Denomination' list, which relies on CTE membership when encouraging applications for Free Church or Christian Chaplaincy posts must have first demonstrated to the Board of FCG that it can fulfil the denominational responsibilities set out below.

DENOMINATION RESPONSIBILITIES

A denomination must meet the following requirements:

Ministerial formation

A denomination must have a robust ministerial formation, training, accreditation and disciplinary process. The ministerial formation process of FCG Group members is considered as part of the application process to join FCG. FCG non-members must also demonstrate the robustness of ministerial formation. FCG is not prescriptive about ministerial formation but must be satisfied that it is robust and there is a suitable accountability process with recourse for disciplinary matters.

Multi-faith

Prison chaplaincy is carried out in a multi-faith context. A denomination will therefore need to demonstrate that its chaplains understand the disciplines of working in a multi-faith context. Where chaplains fail or are unable to work with other faiths groups, FCG would expect their respective denomination to work with the Secretary for Prison Chaplaincy (FCG) to resolve problems, which could, in extreme circumstances, involve the termination of an employment contract with HMPPS.

Non-proselytising

Prison chaplains are not allowed to proselytise within the prison estate. There are strict requirements in this respect that chaplains should understand and apply in their work. It is a disciplinary offence under HMPPS instructions to engage in this type of activity.

Accountability in respect of FCG and Secretary for Prison Chaplaincy (FCG)

Prison chaplains are accountable to FCG and the Secretary for Prison Chaplaincy (FCG). The relationship between the chaplain and the Secretary for Prison Chaplaincy (FCG) is very important. Prison chaplains will be expected to work in a positive and confidential way with the Secretary for Prison Chaplaincy (FCG). The Secretary will provide support and advice, and annually, regional or national events will be run to support Free Church chaplains. The Secretary may remove endorsement if the terms of this protocol are not met, or when informed by a denomination that accreditation has been removed, or if a disciplinary process within an establishment has deemed it inappropriate for that chaplain to continue working in such a capacity.

UK-Based

A denomination must have a national structure of leadership and oversight for its ministers which is based in England or Wales.

Endorsement guidelines

The endorsement guidelines apply to all FCG prison chaplains. Where a chaplain transfers between denominations, the denominations will be expected to apply the guidelines. In addition, chaplains must on an annual basis meet the requirements for CPD. The Secretary for Prison Chaplaincy (FCG) will require evidence on an annual basis that the CPD requirements are being met.

Denomination support for chaplains and agreement to pay FCG fees

A denomination must appoint a regional or national figure overseeing those engaged in prison chaplaincy. In addition to the above:

- each prison chaplain must have someone to whom he or she is directly accountable, within the denomination and who will provide ongoing pastoral support,
- A denomination on the 'Additional Denomination' list must pay FCG an annual fee of £250.00 per chaplain towards the endorsement and support services for their paid Free Church chaplains. Whilst FCG will endorse and fully support volunteer chaplains, this fee be waived for each volunteer chaplain. However, FCG encourages denominations to make a contribution of £50 for each of their volunteer chaplain (80% discount on the full fee) to supports its work