

Spirituality Strategy

Inspiring peace and purpose



MHA Spirituality Strategy
2021-2024



Our purpose

In April 2019, MHA launched a new five year strategy outlining how we would support people to live later life well. Our strategy has four key areas to enable us to achieve this including:

- MHA in the Community
- MHA Enhancing Later Life
- MHA People
- MHA Fit for the Future

The Spirituality Strategy builds upon MHA's strategy to ensure we are able to **enhance quality spiritual care for residents, members, families and colleagues.** Therefore, the aim of the Spirituality Strategy is to guide us over the next three years to ensure we achieve our **mission, values and vision.**

Our Mission

As a charity, our mission is to enable people to live later life well.

Our Values

Inspired by our Methodist roots, we:

Respect every person, treating them with dignity

Nurture mind, body and spirit
Inspire the best in each other

Our Vision

By 2024, we will have increased the quality, impact and reach of our services by connecting our communities and realising our potential as one MHA.

Foreword...



Since MHA was created in 1943, spirituality has been at the heart of our holistic approach to excellent care and support for people in later life.

When we opened our first care home the founding figure in MHA's history, the Reverend Walter Hall, commented: "No enterprise has been entered upon... with a deeper sense of need and divine goodness." This core of spirituality remains at MHA today, as part of our values to nurture mind, body and spirit.

Spiritual care is about the goodness we seek for each other. For Walter this flowed out of his Christian faith and MHA continues to cherish the values that come from our Methodist roots. Confident in these values, today we are an organisation made up of people with many different faiths and beliefs, a diversity which we celebrate.

Spirituality is also about who we are – about what makes each of us unique, and how this relates to our mental wellbeing. It describes the way we respect and care for individuals and communities, recognising and affirming the people and convictions important to each of us.

One expression of our commitment to spiritual care is MHA's chaplaincy. We provide chaplains to listen to people and to care about our individual and collective stories. Through their careful attention, chaplains sustain the most precious aspects of our hopes and fears, walking alongside us in our journeys and working to strengthen the spirit of purpose which is with us all our life, and to the end of life.

I commend this Strategy to everyone connected to MHA. It both highlights the importance of spirituality and sets out our ambition to ensure that spiritual care is a vital and distinctive expression of our activity and identity.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'SM' followed by a stylized flourish.

Sam Monaghan, MHA CEO

Introduction

We know that spirituality is important and everyone's spirituality is different. We treat every person as an individual, involving each person in shaping the way we support their spiritual wellbeing. We also recognise that people live connected to many different communities, not least the MHA service to which they belong. Alongside families and friendships, people are often part of social, religious and activity-based communities.

MHA is one of few care providers that have a dedicated chaplaincy service, nurturing the spiritual needs of residents, members, families and colleagues. Our chaplaincy service aims to meet spiritual needs through one-to-one and group support, providing a sense of comfort, community and a listening ear to everyone who needs it. These services are for people of all beliefs. Although chaplaincy is often the most recognisable resource linked to spiritual care, all colleagues play an important part in supporting people's spirituality.

To see more about the work of chaplaincy and its future, please read the [Chaplaincy Development Plan](#).



Defining Spirituality:

Spirituality looks different for everyone. However, we can say that it's about what brings us meaning and purpose; what puts things into perspective and makes us feel a sense of connection to something beyond us. For example, this could include other people, a higher being, nature and music.

For some, spirituality will involve overtly religious activities like praying, for others it is the meaning they get from meeting with a friend, or spending time in nature. Tending to our spiritual needs can lift our spirits and bring us a sense of peace or hope. Our spirituality could be something we do on our own– or as part of a community such as in a choir.

Perhaps you've had the experience of climbing to the top of a hill; or losing yourself in a piece of music; or giving your time and talents to help other people. Often people describe these experiences as 'spiritual'.

Spirituality describes a sense of purpose and connection. It's about more than simply liking to do something – it links us to a bigger theme or sense of wonder. For example, if we like gardening it might be expressed in the times we feel connected to nature as a whole. A moment when we sense our belonging in the universe or that our planting and tending is linked to a world in which the seasons remind us of the stages of life.

Some examples of what people at MHA said spirituality is to them:

"Makes you feel [that you are] glad you got up this morning."

MHA resident

"What makes you the person you are."

MHA colleague

"God speaking to me."

MHA resident

"Appreciation of the environment."

MHA resident

"Seeing the good in others."

MHA resident

Developing the Strategy

All our commitments are based on what residents, members, families and colleagues have told us is important to them. We gathered this information through surveys and focus groups. Our commitments also align with recent research in:

Promoting Excellence in Pastoral, Spiritual and Religious Care (March 2015, NHS Chaplaincy Guidelines, NHS England).



Our commitments to offer the best possible spiritual care and support

Commitment one

We will ensure that the spiritual care we provide is person-centred and reflects the community in which it is provided.

Commitment two

We will ensure that colleagues understand how everyone can contribute to the way spirituality is recognised and supported.

Commitment three

We will train, support and resource chaplains, ensuring that they are best placed to model MHA values and be ambassadors for holistic care.

Commitment four

We will develop and encourage the role of volunteering within chaplaincy.

Commitment five

We will ensure that colleagues and family members have moments to reflect and the opportunity to express and explore their spiritual needs, as well as support those they care for.

Commitment one

We will ensure that the spiritual care we provide is person-centred and reflects the community in which it is provided.

- We will ask you about your faith and beliefs and support you in these, ensuring these are written in your care plan, supporting you to be you, however you identify.
- We will support you to explore your spirituality, to the extent that you wish to, understanding that this may change over time.
- We will continue to adapt how we provide our spiritual care, in order to be as inclusive as possible and learning from people with a range of experiences.
- We will continue to ensure that chaplaincy is available to all, remaining proud of our roots in Methodism, ensuring that the principle of respectful care for everyone remains alive in all our work.
- We will ensure that communal spiritual activities and services are appropriate to the needs of those living in the home or scheme.
- We recognise the importance of the physical environment of homes and schemes and how these can impact our spiritual wellbeing.
- In MHA Communities, we will work with members to develop spiritual activities and support appropriate to each service.
- We recognise the impact that past negative experiences of religious or faith-based communities may have had, therefore we will ensure chaplains understand these experiences and the concept of religious and spiritual trauma.

“Providing different types of input for differing residents is worthwhile.”

Family member

“Acceptance, openness and love to the LGBT+ community is essential in spirituality to make people feel welcome.”

MHA colleague

“The chaplain...supports residents of faith and non-faith alike through services (optional) and friendly interaction.”

Family member



What does the research say?

“Awareness of the concept of spirituality is integral to the provision of person-centred holistic care.”

Rogers et al (2020).

Commitment two

We will ensure that colleagues understand how everyone can contribute to the way spirituality is recognised and supported.

- We will ensure that meeting your spiritual needs is understood to be a priority by all colleagues, ensuring colleagues understand more fully what spirituality is and means, in the context in which they work.
- We will work in accordance with the Dementia, End of Life Care and Music strategies. We recognise that spirituality can be an important factor to provide peace and comfort for people living with dementia, as well as when you near the end of your life and how music can be a key part of this.



- We will keep chaplaincy free of charge and available to all.
- We will ensure that chaplains are available to colleagues to discuss the meaning of spirituality, as well as offering co-ordinated insights about providing spiritual care.
- We will follow research-based best practice for continuous development of our spiritual care.

“Spirituality wants explaining a bit more.”

MHA resident

“Spirituality can be seen as a nebulous concept, but in reality it is that which gives life meaning.”

Family member

“Spiritual care is integral and not an add on or optional extra.”

Family member

“Having spiritual needs... met can help ensure that physical, social, emotional and cognitive needs can all be better met.”

Family member

“Wellbeing and care is important...look after that spirituality and nurture it.”

MHA colleague

What does the research say?

“All health professionals should...know the reasons for integrating spirituality... and be able to do so in a sensible and sensitive way.”

Koenig (2012).

“In a study of 326 participants, nearly 80% found only significant positive associations between religion/spirituality and well-being.”

Koenig et al (1988).



Commitment three

We will train, support and resource chaplains, ensuring that they are best placed to model MHA values and be ambassadors for the holistic care we strive to offer.

- MHA values (Respect, Nurture and Inspire) will guide the recruitment process, supporting colleagues to fulfil the aims of this strategy.
- We will ensure, where possible, that residents contribute to the recruitment process for chaplains.
- We recognise that community is an important part of spirituality for many people, which includes experiencing the highs and lows of life together. Chaplains will be supported in recognising and facilitating the expression of a group's spirituality.
- We will train chaplains during their induction in how to foster positive communities in their schemes, supporting them to be ambassadors for MHA.
- We will continue to provide pastoral support and best practice support to chaplains through their area support chaplains.
- We will help area support chaplains to engage with local communities (faith based and otherwise) that enhance the work and support of the homes and schemes.
- We will work in accordance with the End of Life Care Strategy, to ensure the sense of community in your scheme is supported at times of bereavement.
- We will continue to develop the digital chaplaincy provision in MHA Communities, further identifying the type of chaplaincy support members and colleagues would wish for.



What does the research say?

“Connections of older people with fundamental aspects of their lives, can help in the ultimate achievement of a better quality of life...lifting themselves above (transcending) the everyday aspects of their lives and working towards an inner peace through their sense of what is sacred and of great importance to them.”

Lepherd et al (2020)

“Social participation and connectedness are important ...[and] there is a need for reciprocity between older adults and their community.”

Emlet et al (2012).

“[I] enjoy the service as [it] brings us together as a community.”

MHA resident

“My relative feels more valued and part of a bigger family by joining in with the various spiritual activities.”

Family member

“The Chaplains...are a great source of support and comfort and I believe do an enormous amount to help identify and meet spiritual needs.”

Family member

“Connection with others and connection with other communities whether it's a faith community or an activity, all brings a positive outcome to the residents. They feel uplifted.”

MHA colleague



Commitment four

We will develop and encourage the role of volunteers within chaplaincy.

- We will actively recruit volunteer chaplains where there is need for more support, seeking to add to the equality, diversity and inclusion of the service.
- We will recognise the important work that volunteer chaplains do.
- We will ensure chaplains support volunteer chaplains who have been unable to be physically present if the home or scheme has had to close to visitors.
- We will explore volunteer chaplaincy within MHA communities, where it is needed and wanted.
- We will develop and research how volunteering and chaplaincy can work more closely together.

“We miss the volunteers that also supported us with chaplaincy.”

MHA resident

“Chaplaincy volunteers... [are] key people with a key role who could be absolute gems and be so helpful for us.”

MHA chaplain



Commitment five

We will ensure that colleagues and family members have moments to reflect and the opportunity to express and explore their spiritual needs, as well as support those they care for.

- We will ensure that there are opportunities for colleagues and family members to reflect through memorials, as One MHA, and within the home or scheme.
- We will encourage colleagues and family members to discuss their spiritual needs with the chaplain and how they might be able to support these.
- We will support the spiritual needs of family members, by doing our best to foster the wellbeing of residents and members.
- We will inform family members of how we are supporting your spiritual needs, if you would like us to, as we understand that they are often key to your spiritual health.
- We will offer pastoral and bereavement support to family members through groups or individual care through chaplaincy.
- We will ensure that there are times of celebration and thanksgiving.
- We recognise for colleagues and family members the care setting can be difficult or tiring for many different reasons, therefore we will continue to provide resources and support for this.

“As long as I know my relative is happy, safe, and enjoying their days with the company of others, I am calmer myself.”

Family member

“Offering a listening ear and a friendly face. Being available to talk when needed. Support on bereavement. All of these have been provided by the chaplain...and are much appreciated.”

Family member



In times of a health emergency, such as a pandemic

- Covid-19 has taught us a lot and we will draw on this experience to develop guidance for spiritual care during a health emergency.
- Our planning will include the best way to keep in touch with family and friends during any time when direct contact isn't possible, for whatever reason.
- We will ensure that all chaplains, who are medically able to, are physically present within the scheme, as a core member of staff.
- We will ensure that chaplains that work across two schemes, if unable to be in both that they are able to provide support from a distance.
- We will ensure that all chaplains are ready to adapt how they are working and support them with resources to do so.
- We will provide a pastoral support phone number that family members and MHA community members can call.
- We will provide extra support to homes and schemes affected by grief, trauma and high levels of mortality during a health emergency.
- We will provide resources for events, both faith-based and non-religious, in your home or scheme to mark the death of a resident, for those unable to attend the funeral.



Implementing the strategy

We acknowledge that the implementation and promotion of this strategy is the key to its success. This is why we will be introducing a number of new initiatives, including:

- Planning a programme of regular stories and messages which illustrate spirituality and the ways in which spiritual care can be provided.
- Developing volunteering within chaplaincy across homes and schemes, ensuring that this adds to the diversity and value of spiritual care.
- Designing an equality impact assessment tool for religious need in a home or scheme when the chaplaincy post is vacant, in order to advertise appropriately in the light of local needs.
- Exploring ways to engage, support and increase understanding of spirituality amongst colleagues, through the use of technology.
- Gathering feedback from both MHA communities and homes and schemes of varied faith traditions, about how spiritual needs can best be supported, individually and communally.
- Providing training for chaplains on understanding religious and spiritual trauma.
- Piloting a monthly newsletter based on spirituality and spiritual care across MHA.
- Providing a template for chaplains to have in their homes and schemes, to ensure clarity of who the chaplain is and their availability.
- Ensuring that MHA's unique experience of spirituality in social care during the pandemic is analysed, with insights shared in events and research.
- Updating the chaplaincy induction programme, to include the role that chaplains have in building positive communities in their schemes.
- Working alongside the End of Life Care Strategy to ensure spiritual needs at the end of life are recorded; and marked appropriately in homes and schemes.

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Epworth House, Stuart Street, DE1 2EQ
01332 296200 | mha.org.uk

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