

CONSOLATION AND HOPE IN A TIME OF CRISIS:
BRINGING CHAPLAINS TOGETHER TO CULTIVATE
HUMAN FLOURISHING AND SPIRITUAL
RESILIENCE IN RESPONSE TO COVID-RELATED
LOSSES FOR YEAR 7 PUPILS



PRACTICE DIGEST | ISSUE 1 | APR 2022

**INTERDENOMINATIONAL SUPPORT
AND RESOURCES FOR SCHOOL CHAPLAINS**

ABOUT NICER

The National Institute for Christian Education Research

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INTRODUCTION

The main focus for the series of digests produced to date has been to share research insights. (<https://nicer.org.uk/spiritual-resilience/research-digests>). The next four digests will now shift to a more practice-based perspective. These will inform and shape the next stage. As the research project progresses, we intend to draw upon the initial findings and the ongoing insight of the chaplains to produce a CPD toolkit on spiritual resilience to be disseminated to a wider audience, including schools without chaplaincy support.

Relating research to practice is essential as it brings quality to implementation and impact.

“No research without action, no action without research” Kurt Lewin¹

“Research is creating new knowledge.” Neil Armstrong²

What follows are recollections from the VCoP meetings, insights from parents and year 7 students, and some initial links to resources, that may help steer the planning stages of the CPD toolkit.

The critical issues identified by the VCoP chaplains

An initial analysis of the data from the VCoP (Virtual Community of Practice) meetings from September 2021 – March 2022 has highlighted common areas of concern and need. Identifying the critical issues for chaplains and Year 7 induction students during the pandemic crisis is a clear starting point for planning the essential foci that will inform the CPD toolkit's creation.

Chaplains and Staff

- Chaplains are dealing more with mental health and pastoral concerns
 - ▶ Chaplains are supporting increased adult and staff anxiety
- There is a lack of time for personal and spiritual wellbeing
 - ▶ The role of the chaplains underwent rapid change
- There is a need to re-build the Christian ethos and vision within the school community.
 - ▶ The absence of communal worship has impacted on the school as a spiritual community

Year 7 induction students

- End of year transition and induction procedures have become fragmented
 - ▶ There is widespread evidence of increased immaturity of Year 7 students. This is evident in difficulties with friendship groups and looking to adults to work out friendship issues. Students appears as dependent rather than independent students.
- There is a major increase of mental health and anxiety concerns
 - ▶ Increasing numbers of students have issues with self – worth and self -identity.
 - ▶ Separation anxiety is apparent in students' reluctance to attend school.
- Chaplains have identified a need for trauma recovery, immediate and long term.
- There is an urgent need to nurture spiritual awareness with church school communities.

Parents' perceptions of Year 7 induction in the pandemic.

During the research in conversations with parents the following themes have been identified.

- An appreciation overall of the rapid response of schools in reaction to unprecedented and unknown territory during the pandemic.
- The value of new online processes such as improved communication between school and home with the use of MS Teams and the virtual tours of the school. The latter enabled the child to share their new school with the wider family and allowed them to revisit the school virtually.
- The bubble system provided reassurance to parents that children were having a softer introduction to the new school environment. Spending more time with the tutor group, and being taught within this group, helped them create friendship bonds. Although some were aware that this had prolonged the anxiety of meeting the rest of the school.
- Summer schools were seen as a positive, helping children meet with their new form or tutor groups and teachers before starting school.
- There was a mixed response to the role of chaplains in the induction process. Some parents didn't know who the chaplain was or if a chaplain was part of the school, and others said that the chaplain was a person their child could go to if they were worried. One parent was surprised that when key staff were introduced to the students this did not include the school chaplain. They argued there was a case for the chaplain to have a higher profile in the induction process.
- For a parent of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, there was a desire for more spiritual support for such children and a more significant role for the chaplain in provision of reflection and prayer sessions.

Further research is needed, to gather parents and children's views about transition during crisis situations such as the pandemic. We are investigating this possibility as part of this research process.

What have chaplains identified as best practice arising out of the pandemic in nurturing spiritual resilience in their own and each other's practice?

Improving Communications

- New skills with technology have helped with communication between staff, students, and parents; for example, one chaplain reported that with students and parents of Year 7, *'we've been on virtual pilgrimages.'*

"Teams has become a good vehicle for contact... [some] students were more inclined via chats to ask questions... that maybe they wouldn't have done in the real world."
Chaplain, (VCoP1)

Openness in talking about death

- Some chaplains noticed that death-related conversations have become less of a taboo amongst staff and students. Students seem to be more open to the value of prayer and reflection.

"Talking about loss, talking about death and illness has become more of the vocabulary." Chaplain, (VCoP 1)

New approaches to induction

- One school has been able to help Year 7s feel connected with the wider community linked to their school via virtual introductions. For instance, in this school, the convent of sisters and church community have been able to speak about their connection and experience of the school community using the medium of Microsoft Teams.

“Circumstances have forced us to think differently and probably better, and this is something we will keep in the future.” Chaplain, (VCoP 1)

Offering regular online worship engagement voluntarily

- One chaplain sent home to all students the daily act of worship during lockdown (Jan- March 2021) via the Show My Homework system. It was made clear to students that this was a voluntary task. An engagement analysis revealed that 21% of KS3 students had engaged with the act of worship, and 24% were Year 7 students. 21% were Year 8 students, and 17% were Year 9 students.

WHAT SUPPORT AND RESOURCES ARE CURRENTLY AVAILABLE FOR CHAPLAINS AND SCHOOLS?

We are beginning to compile a list of existing resources available to chaplains. What follows is not an exhaustive list of resources for chaplains, but as part of our working party, it gives a sense of what is offered for school chaplains and students. This list has been compiled from a desktop search. The next stage will be an evaluation of these resources to identify how they address the concerns raised above by chaplains and others about nurturing the spiritual resilience of Year 7 students and to identify what other resources are needed. Where are the gaps in the provision?

Support for Chaplains Personal Development and Role

Chaplaincy Central – www.chaplaincycentral.co.uk

Children, Youth and Mission (CYM) - <https://cym.ac.uk/centre-for-chaplaincy>

Centre for Chaplaincy in Education – www.centreforchaplaincyineducation.co.uk

Connecting Chaplains - www.youtube.com/channel/UCXFU8B2eymYMIDeLZx2ubZg

Specific Resources for Chaplains

Centre for Chaplaincy in Education

– www.centreforchaplaincyineducation.co.uk/pages/resources

Chaplaincy Central – www.chaplaincycentral.co.uk

The Methodist Church Chaplaincy Resources and Links

- www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/chaplaincy/chaplaincy-resources-and-links

The Bible Society - www.biblesociety.org.uk/get-involved/school-chaplain-resources

Diocese of Westminster

- <https://education.rcdow.org.uk/chaplaincy-resources-support-materials>

Oxford Schools Chaplaincy - www.oxfordschoolschaplaincy.org/schools/resources

Education Commission for the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark

- www.rcaoseducation.org.uk/resources/chaplaincy

Diocese of Bath and Wells

- www.bathandwells.org.uk/ministry/children-young-people/resources-and-ideas-for-children-and-young-people

General Resources for Chaplains

Mark10Mission - www.themark10mission.co.uk
CAFOD - <https://cafod.org.uk/Education/Education-resources>
Salvation Army - www.salvationarmy.org/resources
Thy Kingdom Come - www.thykingdomcome.global/prayer-resources
The Resources Cupboard - <https://theresourcescupboard.co.uk>
Brentwood Catholic Youth Service - <https://bcys.net/resource-categories>
Pray for Schools - www.prayforschools.org
Prayer Spaces - <https://prayerspacesinschools.com>
Celebrate Trust - www.celebratetrust.org/celebrateathome
Kitchen Table Project - <https://kitchentable.org.uk>
TenTen Resources - www.tentenresources.co.uk
Lifewords - www.lifewords.global/shop/product/little-book-of-chaos
ROOTs - www.rootsontheweb.com
LecDeck - www.bathandwells.org.uk/ministry/children-young-people/lecdeck
Chat Mats - www.bathandwells.org.uk/ministry/children-young-people/bible-chat-mat
Youth Work Resources - www.youthscape.co.uk/store/themes/youth-work-resources

Mental Health and Wellbeing Resources/ Training

Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families
- www.annafreud.org/schools-and-colleges/resources
The Mind & Soul Foundation
- www.mindandsoulfoundation.org/Groups/288717/Mind_and_Soul/Resources/Resources.aspx
Trauma Informed Schools - www.traumainformedschools.co.uk
Kent Resilience Hub - <https://kentresiliencehub.org.uk/schools/the-resilience-toolkit/resources-new/all-resources>
Thrive - www.thriveapproach.com/about-thrive

Reflections

1. Are there further issues, linked to chaplaincy work and Year 7 induction that have not been mentioned?
2. Is there anything in the ways parents and Year 7 students have responded to crisis transition and induction procedures that could inform a resource toolkit?
3. What best practice examples of nurturing spiritual resilience amongst Year 7 induction students should be highlighted?
4. Where are their gaps in resources available for chaplains, Year 7 induction and spiritual resilience?

1 Lewin, K in *Applied Social Psychology* (2022). Powered by WordPress.
Accessed via <https://sites.psu.edu/aspsy/tag/kurt-lewin/> on 23/03/2022

2 Armstrong, N in Umek, L. (2021) Neil Armstrong: Research is creating new knowledge.
Accessed via <https://lekh.co/neil-armstrong-research-life-on-moon-astronaut-apollo-11/> on 23/03/2022

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