

14th March 2024

Dr Rima Makarem
Sue Ryder
First Floor Kings House
King Street
Sudbury
CO10 2ED

Dear Dr Makarem and the Board of Trustees,

We are writing to you in response to your decision to no longer provide specialist chaplaincy care as part of the services your hospices provide. We believe your decision to be a retrograde step in relation to the delivery of safe and effective pastoral, spiritual and religious care at end of life. We also wish to express our disappointment that you made this decision without consulting any of the professional bodies representing Healthcare Chaplaincy.

We understand you intend to seek support from faith leaders in the community. It is not clear how this will work in practice. While there are excellent faith leaders serving communities across the country, the 2023 NHS Chaplaincy Guidelines are clear that the knowledge, skills and behaviours required of a chaplain are not necessarily coterminous to those of a faith leader.

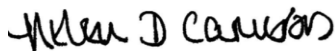
The Free Churches Group has a history of advocating freedom of belief and conscience. We are concerned that the proposed changes could leave someone with a non-religious worldview, who is not part of a particular faith community, or who has spiritual distress relating to theological teachings or experiences, without appropriate pastoral, spiritual and religious support at a vital time in their lives. We believe that needs such as these require timely and specialist interventions which it would be unwise and unrealistic to expect volunteers and local faith groups to resource and provide.

The Free Churches Group is passionate about the value of Healthcare Chaplaincy and works to support chaplains who come from a Free Church tradition to provide high-quality, evidence-based and patient centred chaplaincy care. We are keen to work with all stakeholders to ensure that those in need of chaplaincy care receive support of the highest standard. We view the pastoral, spiritual and religious care that chaplains provide as being a key part of holistic person centred healthcare. This is often more

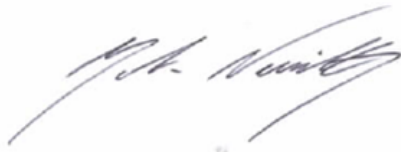
crucial when facing life-limiting illness and death. In both inpatient and community settings there is a clear need for holistic palliative care of which specialist chaplaincy care is an integral part.

Please do not overlook our concerns.

Yours sincerely,



Helen Cameron
Moderator



Mark Newitt
Secretary for Healthcare Chaplaincy



Sarah Crane
*Chair, Healthcare
Chaplaincy Steering
Committee*

Moderator: Revd Helen Cameron

General Secretary: Revd Paul Rochester

Assemblies of God - Baptist Union of Great Britain - Baptist Union of Wales - Churches in Communities International - Church of God of Prophecy - Church of the Nazarene - Congregational Federation - Council of African & Caribbean Churches UK - Christ Apostolic Church - Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion - Elim Pentecostal Church - Fellowship of Churches of Christ - Free Church of England - Free Methodist Church - Independent Methodist Churches - Joint Council of Churches for All Nations - Methodist Church - Moravian Church - New Testament Assembly - New Testament Church of God - Old Baptist Union - Order of St Leonard - Presbyterian Church of Wales - Salvation Army - Union of Welsh Independents - United Reformed Church - Wesleyan Reform Union

*Free Church Federal Council (Inc) trading as The Free Churches Group
Company No. 00364987 England & Wales, Charity No. 236878*