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March 2021

Supporting Trans and Non-Binary Staff and Students

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Centre for Religion in Society

York St John University

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Acknowledgements

This research would not have been possible without generous financial assistance from the Church Universities Fund and York St John University. The application was supported by Dr Richard Bourne, Revd Dr Christina Beardsley, Revd Dr Rachel Mann and the Revd Garry Neave. We are grateful that they believed this research was necessary and valuable.

The research was carried out at Anglican Foundation higher education institutions in the UK, and we are thankful for the Cathedrals Group universities network.

We are indebted to all the university chaplains, priests, staff and students who participated in questionnaires, interviews and storyboards, and to the LGBT+ networks who promoted our research, especially Marije Davidson, Kalen Reid, Revd Jane Speck and Kaden Kellett-Jones.

We would like to thank all the participants who read the draft report and contributed to the report workshop during the global pandemic (COVID-19). Your online engagement was vital to ensuring accurate and fair representation with practical and impactful outcomes. In particular, the final report has benefitted from detailed attention and feedback given by Revd Dr Christina Beardsley and Dr Michael Bonshor. We would have preferred to gather with you all in person and hope to do so in the future.

This report makes recommendations for chaplains and other support networks in education and beyond. It is underpinned by the trans and non-binary activists and authors who have been challenging exclusion for years. Without you, and the trans and non-binary folk who trusted us with their stories, this report would not have been possible. We hope the recommendations assist in creating more person-centred, inclusive, and empowering educational environments for gender-diverse staff and students.

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To cite this report: McIntosh, E. and Jagger, S. (2021) *Supporting Trans and Non-Binary Staff and Students.* York: York St John University.

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Contents

Executive Summary....5
Introduction: The Aims and Scope of the Research....11
Background....16
The Social and Cultural Context....16
The Legislative Framework....18
Trans and Non-Binary Folk and Christianity....20
The Higher Education Context....24
Literature about Chaplaincies....30
Findings Summary....35
The Survey....35
Participation through Displays....43
Interviews with Chaplains....48
Church Positioning and Debates....48
Churches and 'Safe Space'....54
University and Church Cultures....59
Resisting Negative Church Messages....62
Student and Staff Bodies....67
Chaplaincy as 'Safe Space'....72
Relational Stories within Chaplaincies....74
Interviews with Trans and Non-Binary Staff and Students....78
Interviews with Rachel Mann and Christina Beardsley....88
The Culture of the Church of England and the Lived Experience of Trans Priests....88
The Wider Cultural Challenges and Support for Trans Persons....95

Signs, Symbols and Language 97
Chaplaincies as a Place of Support 98
Recommendations 101
Listening To and Working with Trans and Non-Binary People 103
Learning as a Continual Process 104
Conversing on Matters of Faith 105
Influencing 106
Being Visible and Accessible 106
Collaborating 109
Resourcing 110
Recommended Reading 112
References 113

Executive Summary

This project was funded by the Church Universities Fund and York St John University; it sought out and listened to the views of trans[1] and non-binary students and staff, chaplains from Anglican Foundation universities, and two prominent trans priests in the Church of England. Interviews provided a set of rich narratives focussed on the lived experiences of trans and non-binary folk on university campuses and in church environments. Chaplains provided details regarding their current knowledge and practices, and the potential for developing their support to trans and non-binary staff and students. All the recommendations in this report are underpinned by the principles of amplifying and listening to trans and non-binary voices, and we suggest chaplains build an iterative listening process into their work to ensure trans and non-binary people define what support they would like and how it can be delivered effectively.

A significant theme we set out to explore is how chaplains help Christian trans and non-binary people negotiate their faith in the face of ambivalent and ambiguous messages circulating within the media and the Church of England. Revd Dr Rachel Mann and Revd Dr Christina Beardsley discussed the current Church climate, the debates around provision of a liturgical welcome for trans people and the factionalised atmosphere that creates polarising arguments.

Chaplains often signpost trans and non-binary students and staff to local churches that are considered inclusive and welcoming, whilst recognising that individuals within churches can compromise the belonging of trans and non-binary people even in officially welcoming churches. Our discussion extends to campus-based faith groups some of which are perceived to be conservative in theology and doctrine, creating barriers to trans and non-binary Christians. We discuss the discourses involved in the creation of

[1] Throughout this report, we have aimed to use 'trans' as an adjective rather than a noun – trans folk, trans activists, trans community and so on. We have used the two-word form of trans women and trans men rather than the one-word forms, which, for many, have associations with trans-exclusion; although, some trans folk do use the one-word forms. In addition, we have used 'trans' to denote and include a spectrum of identities that are outside of the gender binary – genderqueer, genderfluid, bigender and so on – rather than the more specific 'transgender', with the exception of quotations and explicit reference to, for example, laws or statistics that use the term 'transgender'. We recognise that not all non-binary people refer to themselves as trans and that they may feel excluded from the focus of some trans discourse; hence, we refer to both trans and non-binary folk in this report.

boundaries, and we explore whether protective discourses are counterproductive when trans and non-binary folk seek to challenge and be seen. We explored this dynamic through interactive displays and met with resistance from authority figures who were opposed to a public mechanism for gathering stories from trans and non-binary people. Whilst this opposition stemmed from a well-intentioned concern to protect, we discuss how this reveals perceptions about 'safe space' and the reproduction of vulnerability discourses. The consideration of language and discourse is a major theme throughout this project. We probe the differences between vulnerability and resourcefulness discourses and whether there is a need to reorient language and policy making towards the ways in which spaces are created as 'unsafe' rather than perceiving individuals as presenting 'issues' that require fixing. Discussions about 'safe' and 'unsafe' spaces reveal the complexities around power and meaning making and who draws boundaries to create insider/outsider identities.

Chaplains talk about creating 'safe space' that provides an environment where there is no judgement, where there is an opportunity to be listened to, and where disclosures about identity can be made, explored, and supported. These moments are described as 'holy ground' moments by Rachel Mann, and chaplains may need to prepare for such moments by increasing their knowledge of trans and non-binary concerns and by taking a 'whole person' approach to their support activities; this may involve continual training for chaplains either within the university context or at the diocesan level. There are also opportunities to enhance support through the continual development of a network of relationships between chaplaincies and staff- and student-led groups on campus. The trans and non-binary folk we interviewed felt it was important for chaplains to be part of a team of allies, particularly when there are opportunities to commemorate a calendar of events designed to raise awareness. To counter exclusionary messages from the Church, chaplains often work on their visibility as support on campus, using recognisable LGBTQ+ iconography alongside signs such as the clerical collar to disrupt the association with conservative positions on gender and sexuality. Nevertheless, chaplains need to be cautious of the risk of homogenising identities within the LGBTQ+ umbrella and aware of the challenges inherent in tailoring support for different groups of people.[2] The visibility of chaplains can be enhanced by their involvement in, and co-creation of, annual activities for Trans Day of Remembrance, Trans Day of Visibility, LGBT+ History Month and Pride. Interviewees also suggested that visibility of support is linked to the positive meaning

accrued around material signs of welcome, such as trans- and non-binary-inclusive posters and advertising of events.

The following recommendations are designed to help chaplains review their existing supportive practices and develop new ways of working where there might be gaps in provision. We acknowledge that many chaplains are already developing some of the strategies we outline, and we hope that sharing good practice and varied experiences becomes a regular exercise for the cohort involved in this project and beyond. We have deliberately refined and reduced the number of recommendations we are making to ensure that they are practicable and impactful: these are interconnected recommendations forming a rounded strategy of listening, learning, developing, and influencing and, therefore, are not designed to be implemented in isolation from one another.

Recommendation 1: To Listen and To Share

University chaplains should undertake regular exercises, formal and informal, to listen to, consult with, and gain feedback from trans and non-binary staff and students about chaplaincy experiences and activities and more general experiences on campus. Listening and consulting work may be planned by other groups on campus, and chaplains should investigate how they can be involved in a wider landscape of listening and 'seeing' (without interrogating or prying). Following Rachel Mann's comments about sharing stories, and supporting the 'resourcefulness' discourse (Dirks, 2016), we recommend that chaplains explore the space, time, and opportunity they can offer to hear and, where appropriate, facilitate the amplification of trans and non-binary people's stories. Whilst some of this listening will be private and confidential, there are creative ways chaplains can support trans and non-binary folk to tell their stories publicly, such as interactive displays, blogs, and videos.

Recommendation 2: To Learn

As Beardsley and O'Brien (2016, p. 52) state, labels and terms can be both liberating and oppressive depending on the background of the individual person, the current context,

[2] In particular, whilst 'Q+' is intended to be inclusive of intersex and asexual persons, for example, visible inclusion via the use of LGBTQIA+ might be preferable. In this report, we have used LGBT+ and LGBTQ+ when referring to commonly used abbreviations in the literature or calendar, such as LGBT+ History Month. For the purposes of this project, we used LGBTQIA+ when recruiting participants.

and the relationships being developed. We recommend that chaplains and others offering support engage in continuous learning about the changing language and terminology used by trans and non-binary folk and ensure individuals are given the opportunity to communicate which terms they wish to be used, recognising that names and pronoun choices can be fluid and changing. As both Rachel Mann and Christina Beardsley explain, moments of disclosure are 'holy ground': we recommend that chaplains are fully prepared for these moments by reading about trans and non-binary people's journeys and keeping up to date on good practice.

Recommendation 3: To Develop Trans-Inclusive Theology

Based on McMahon's (2016) call for trans people to develop trans-inclusive theology as 'insiders', we recommend that chaplains support or help to establish faith-based groups for trans and non-binary people within and between university chaplaincies to encourage the leadership potential of trans and non-binary Christians and their confidence in matters of faith. We also recommend that trans-inclusive theologies be foregrounded in chaplaincies to guard against reproducing boundaries between privileged, dominant theologies and theologies that are constructed as minoritarian; this involves developing explicit ways of challenging cultural, doctrinal, and theological discourses that exclude trans and non-binary folk (or any others included under the LGBTQ+ banner).

Recommendation 4: To Influence

Where there is a gap in training provision, chaplains can act collectively to plan specialist training events on university campuses. In addition, we have noted that chaplains sometimes feel marginalised in their diocese; even so, from this marginal position, chaplains can influence diocesan authorities to facilitate church-based training to generate knowledge and understanding of trans and non-binary concerns amongst local churches. Beardsley and O'Brien (2016) recommend the appointment of a diocesan champion, with knowledge of trans matters and the structuring of support throughout the Church: we recommend that chaplains point to this recommendation and request that diocesan authorities introduce a trans and non-binary diocesan champion.

Recommendation 5: To Be Visible

Whilst the rainbow is widely recognised as a positive sign for LGBTQ+ people, we recommend that chaplaincies also explore using specific trans and non-binary iconography to establish visibility that is not subsumed into a generic LGBTQ+ sign. We

recommend that chaplains use posters, postcards and displays to establish visibility of support and welcome all year round. We recommend that chaplains take advantage of the early opportunity to establish a presence at the beginning of the academic year by being fully involved in Welcome Week/Freshers' Week/Induction Week. Several chaplains are already developing this annual activity and there may be ways of enhancing involvement in the events taking place at the start of the academic year to broadcast the signs of welcome specifically for trans and non-binary people. We also recommend that chaplains use the established calendar of events – LGBT+ History Month, Trans Day of Visibility, Trans Day of Remembrance, Pride and so on - to enhance the visibility of the support offered to trans and non-binary folk, whilst ensuring that chaplains only act 'on behalf of' the trans community when called upon to do so. Annual visibility in internationally recognised trans and non-binary events, as well as local ones, gives rhythm and continuity to chaplaincy support and provides opportunities to develop working relationships with trans and non-binary students and staff.

Recommendation 6: To Be Accessible

Trans and non-binary people who do not have a faith may wish to access quiet, private space, but might not be familiar with the ways in which the chaplaincy space works. We recommend that chaplains explore the possibilities for making their quiet spaces more accessible with clear guidance for students on how to use the space, when it is available for quiet time alone, whom to ask about the space and so on. Other significant considerations chaplains should consider when developing the accessibility of the chaplaincy include: the balance between providing practical and emotional support, stepping back from a 'fixing' role, examining unconscious or implicit bias and personal theological positioning, exploring what space and time is made available in the chaplaincy to facilitate a confidential and private disclosure.

Recommendation 7: To Collaborate

We recommend that chaplains work with university groups and Student Unions on collective trans and non-binary affirmative activities exploring networking opportunities between chaplaincy and other staff and student bodies (including LGBTQ+ groups and faith groups) – such as academic symposia or social events - with the purpose of developing dialogue at the intersections of faith, belief, gender, and sexual identities. There is scope for an ongoing working group, using this project as a springboard, to

continue to collaborate with trans and non-binary people and chaplains to develop and share ideas and good practice. Beardsley and O'Brien (2016) recommend that religious debate takes place in the context of modern medical and psychological understanding and this requires introducing the appropriate expertise into the discussion. Where chaplains are taking on a more proactive role in stimulating learning on campus and within the diocese, we recommend that such discussions are led and directed by trans and non-binary people and allied expertise (with the proviso that trans and non-binary people should not be expected to be experts or to bear the burden of educating others, unless they choose to put themselves forward for this task).

Recommendation 8: To Resource

Chaplains stated in the interviews that they need to understand the character of churches in their diocese, if they are to signpost staff and students to places of worship that are wholly welcoming of trans and non-binary folk. We recommend that chaplains maintain an up-to-date list of places of worship of different denominations and religions that are known to be inclusive and 'safe': this will require regular research on the part of chaplains to ensure their knowledge is current, including encouraging feedback from trans and non-binary church attendees regarding their experiences of churches. We also recommend that chaplaincies work with trans and non-binary students and staff to review and/or develop trans-inclusive policies and materials that are used in the chaplaincy, including posters and leaflets for display and distribution, incorporating details of local and national trans and non-binary support services.

Introduction: The Aims and Scope of the Research

This research project aimed, through consultation with LGBTQIA+ persons, to identify ways in which chaplaincies at Anglican Foundation universities can support students and staff who identify as trans and/or non-binary. For the purpose of this report, we are using the term 'support' to encompass all the numerous ways, from administrative to emotional, in which chaplains may be called upon to assist staff and/or students; we emphasise throughout that 'support' should aim at empowering staff and students to exercise agency. Given our identity as cisgendered, heterosexual women we approached the project with caution, whilst also recognising that trans people might not be public about their trans history, and, in that sense, could only join the project as trans persons if doing so anonymously. We began, therefore, by consulting Equality and Diversity university representatives and trans priests, Rachel Mann and Christina Beardsley, alongside the reading of methodology discussions regarding the ethics of doing trans-focussed research as cisgendered researchers (Johnston, 2018; Martin and Meezan, 2009). Ethical scrutiny was undertaken and passed by York St John University. Once funding was secured, we recruited an openly non-binary student, with remuneration (not unpaid labour), to assist with work on the project. Throughout the project our aim was to hear, amplify and centre trans and non-binary voices; to this end, the draft report was shared with our interviewees and a workshop – online due to COVID-19 – was held to ensure the co-creation of the final content and recommendations. We remain indebted to our interviewees and to all those who filled in the survey for their generous giving of time and emotional labour, and also to the Church Universities Fund and York St John University for providing the financial means to carry out the research.

The taxonomy used to refer to groups of gender variant and sexually diverse people is manifold and changing. For clarity, this report will use LGBTQ+ with the understanding that multiple identities are being signified. The definitions of transgender and non-binary identities have also developed over the years. 'Trans' is often used to denote a wide range of identities (with or without medical intervention; see Stryker, 2017 for a detailed explanation of terms and definitions); hence, this report will use this terminology to include a continuum of identities. Statistical data on the number of trans people in the UK is not robust and might constitute approximately one per cent of the population,[3] but trans folk

frequently experience abusive behaviour and have much higher rates of attempted suicide than the majority population (Bailey, Ellis and McNeill, 2014; Beardsley and O'Brien, 2016); [4] according to Stonewall research, 48% of trans people have attempted suicide (Stonewall, 2012). Moreover, the recent consultation on proposed reforms to the Gender Recognition Act 2004 in the UK attracted mainstream Press coverage, public anxiety, demonstrations and counterdemonstrations, all contributing to the scrutiny of trans people, whose lives and identities have been thrust into the spotlight and dissected by strangers. The outcome of the consultation rejected the introduction of self-identification and reinvigorated the moral debate around trans rights.[5]

While much of the antagonism has focused on single-sex bathrooms and 'women only' spaces, universities need to do more to support the mental health and well-being of trans folk than merely assert the right of staff and students to use the bathrooms with which they feel most comfortable (although this is clearly important too). In conjunction with the challenges to gender that have been highlighted by trans activists, there is a rapidly growing proportion of openly non-binary and non-gendered persons who may require gender-neutral labelling of spaces and gender-neutral pronouns. Universities are having to grapple with administrative matters, such as the changing of gender and name on formal documents, as well as political and moral matters, such as raising awareness of, and implementing, the rights and concerns of those with fluid identities. In conjunction with the self-determination of gender identity, sexuality may be in flux; hence, students and staff may need support from universities in respect of LGBTQ+ visibility and affirmation, together with a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment and abuse that includes

[3] This figure has been cited by the LGBT Foundation https://lgbt.foundation/smirnoff/trans-by-numbers , Stonewall https://www.stonewall.org.uk/truth-about-trans#trans-people-britain and GIRES (Gender Identity Research and Education Society) https://www.gires.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Prevalence2011.pdf , but all acknowledge the difficulties in obtaining accurate figures.

[4] According to the Samaritans, in 2018 there were 6,507 recorded suicides in the UK; see https://media.samaritans.org/documents/SamaritansSuicideStatsReport_2019_Full_report.pdf The World Health Organisation suggests that for each death by suicide, there may have been twenty more attempted suicides; see https://www.who.int/mental_health/suicide-prevention/world_report_2014/en/ If this is correct, the number of attempted suicides in the UK is approximately 2% of the population.

[5] See UK Parliament, House of Commons Research Briefing 'Gender Recognition Reform: Consultation and Outcome', 10 December 2020; available at: https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9079/ In the same month, a high court judgement challenged the ability of children to consent to hormone blockers; see 'Stonewall Statement on High Court Puberty Blockers Ruling', 1 December 2020: https://www.stonewall.org.uk/about-us/news/stonewall-statement-high-court-puberty-blockers-ruling

clear pathways for reporting and disciplining perpetrators in a timely and appropriate manner, alongside the provision of assistance and counselling for victims and survivors. Sexual harassment and assault on university campuses and in church communities is a current area of challenge affecting persons of all identities and sexualities, as revealed by the 2018 report, *In Churches Too* (Aune and Barnes, 2018) and the Revolt Sexual Assault and The Student Room national consultation.[6] Staff and students with a faith background may turn to the chaplaincy[7] for advice in the aftermath of sexual harassment and abuse; they may also seek guidance in respect of their own beliefs and practices, their perception of the official position of their religious community, and the negotiation of their identity and sexuality with friends and family. It is imperative that chaplains have tools with which to approach such conversations, especially when the inclusivity and diversity policy of their university may appear to be at odds with official or mainstream religious leadership and documents.

On the one hand, the Church of England has for some time recognised the existence of trans people. In 2000, Carol Stone became the first trans Anglican priest having transitioned from male to female with the support of her bishop, while, in 2005, Sarah Jones was the first openly trans Anglican priest to be ordained. Despite this promising picture, however, in its 2003 document *Some Issues in Human Sexuality,* which contains a consideration of 'transsexualism',[8] the Church of England falls back on the binary terminology of 'male' and 'female' as found in English translations of biblical texts (Genesis 5:2). Furthermore, as Christina Beardsley points out, the document reaches its conclusions surrounding identity and sexuality without consulting any trans people (Dowd and Beardsley, 2018). Moreover, as discovered in Sharon Jagger's doctoral thesis and attested to by Rachel Mann, a trans person may find that the Anglican church is more accepting of their identity than their sexuality. Even though Justin Welby apologised in

[6] The consultation found that 62% of those surveyed had experienced sexual violence, including 61% of non-binary respondents, and noted that figures for rape on university campuses were higher than those recorded amongst the general population; see https://revoltsexualassault.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Report-Sexual-Violence-at-University-Revolt-Sexual-Assault-The-Student-Room-March-2018.pdf

[7] Throughout this report we use 'the chaplaincy' to mean a physical place on campus and 'chaplaincy' to mean a range of services and practices.

[8] Some trans people do use the term transexual; other trans people find the term unhelpful. On the one hand, the term confuses trans identity with sexuality; on the other hand, it emphasises medical intervention and can be used to draw divisive distinctions between trans persons who have gender confirmation/affirmation surgery and those who do not.

2016 for the pain caused to LGBTQ+ Anglicans, his original comments referred only to sexuality and the Church (although he still did not condone same-sex marriage) and there was no mention of trans and gender variant people (BBC News, 2016); this illuminates the problem of conflation and lack of knowledge about the identities that are placed within the LGBTQ+ umbrella. The House of Bishop's official stance on same-sex marriage is one of opposition – only permitting heterosexual marriages in the Church – which leaves the door open for spiritual abuse as experienced by Jayne Ozanne (Sherwood, 2017). Likewise, the Church of England's 2014 (updated in 2019), document, *Valuing All God's Children,* speaks out against homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying in Church of England schools, and yet the House of Bishops rejected the request to draw up official prayers and liturgies to welcome transitioned persons; a stance that has been met with disappointment by Sibyls and the LGBTI Anglican Coalition (Sarmiento, 2018). In an attempt to placate calls from within the Church, official guidance has been issued on the use of The Affirmation of Baptismal Faith as a means of providing liturgical recognition of trans people in a service of celebration and verification.[9] As our interviews with Rachel Mann and Christina Beardsley reveal, the process of acceptance has not been smooth, and the continuing debates have sent a message of ambivalent and qualified welcome for trans people. Chaplains working in Anglican Foundation universities will have to negotiate these competing messages: the ambiguities of the Church position, the inclusive but not always effective statements and policies in universities, and the needs and concerns of trans and non-binary students and staff.

Universities with an Anglican Foundation in the UK are part of this on-going debate within the Anglican Communion. What makes them unusual, perhaps, is that they function less within the confines of a church-centred community and mostly with a generation who have little association with a church. Nevertheless, openness about gender and sexuality is often accompanied by periods of deep anxiety and uncertainty by those who do not, as well as by those who do, have an explicit religious affiliation. As young people transition into adulthood, gender identity can become more pressing and difficult to negotiate without support from others. Universities will offer a range of support services, which may or may not be equipped to deal with the way in which trans issues have evolved in recent years; staff who are transitioning or are non-binary will be accustomed to binary expectations and limitations.

[9] See https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-12/Pastoral%20Guidance-Affirmation-Baptismal-Faith.pdf

University chaplains are a distinctive element of the support services at Anglican Foundation Universities; operating as a 'front-line' service to LGBTQ+ people, they are likely to be called upon to offer a faith perspective on trans and non-binary identities, as well as sexual harassment, sexuality and its practices. Universities are perceived as sexually active places, and this can be exclusionary for asexual people, and daunting for those unsure of their sexual identity, particularly if they come from a community that holds faith-related taboos regarding exploration of sexual activity. Students or staff asking chaplains for support with any of these aspects of their lives may be seeking to reconcile their faith with their identity or sexuality, or they may desire a particular sort of assistance that comes from a faith-based position. This project aims to open out the dialogue among universities, particularly chaplaincies, that will shape inclusive policy and practices for supporting trans and non-binary people. The recommendations set out in this document are centred around the voices and experiences, difficulties and challenges relayed to us in a survey of and interviews with trans and non-binary staff and students; our intention is to amplify these voices, to hear their concerns and to effect positive change in the university sector. Both good practice and challenges have been raised in our discussions with chaplains. We have developed a set of recommendations drawn from the voices of trans and non-binary staff and students who contributed to the project, the chaplains who shared their working practices and difficulties with us, and based on the advice and guidance given by trans priests Rachel Mann and Christina Beardsley.

Background

> The Church still seems to want to pretend that those who are different do not exist. Denying that people exist erases their humanity" (O'Brien, 2016, p. 54).

There is a growing body of literature focusing on trans and non-binary experiences and explorations that includes autobiographical accounts, academic research and theological discussion. For the purposes of this project, we focus here on the research that examines: the development of the legislative framework, research into higher education and the experiences of trans and non-binary students, literature about chaplaincies within universities, and literature about the trans and non-binary experience of the Christian faith. Our research sits at the nexus where these bodies of work connect as we explore the role of chaplaincy in supporting trans and non-binary staff and students on campus, some of whom have a faith and some of whom do not. Literature is also available that explores the wider socio-cultural story of trans people, focusing on the social pressures, the violence, the damage to health and well-being, and the barriers to flourishing that are experienced by trans and non-binary people; this is vital knowledge for anyone providing support and pastoral care and as such there is a recommended reading list at the end of this report. There is currently more literature written by and/or focusing on trans women and trans men than by/about non-binary people; whilst some non-binary folk identify as trans not all non-binary people use this terminology. Furthermore, different issues emerge if a person is transitioning either outside of or across binary constructions of gender, and we need to guard against either conflating or separating inappropriately trans and non-binary identities.

The Social and Cultural Context

A useful and accessible account of the coalescing of a trans community is provided by Susan Stryker (2017). Whilst US-centric, her chronology offers an important explanation of the political relationships beneath the LGBTQ+ umbrella. The Stonewall Riots in the US, regarded as a defining moment for gay liberation, included trans activists, but this was not necessarily an easy coalition. Our project raises the problem of obfuscation of the needs of trans and non-binary people that can occur because of the tendency to use

LGBTQ+ (and its variations) as shorthand for identities outside of normative heterosexual binary constructions. Although the shorthand has been useful for political traction; it is possible, Stryker suggests, to have 'different, overlapping, or even contradictory personal identities' (p. 27) that trouble categories. As definitions have blurred, it is incumbent on those who support trans and non-binary people to be aware of a broader range of trans identities. Stryker offers a comprehensive guide to the language developed to articulate the trans and non-binary experience and explains the multiple abbreviations and phrases that are becoming part of the lexicon, particularly for young people. As there is an evolving vernacular around gender variance and sexuality, discussions based on research with trans people offer insight into preferred language and usage (see, for example, Ryan, 2019). In one of our interviews, a chaplain raised language change as a learning curve, and an area in which young people are in a position to teach others about the language and symbols they use to describe themselves and their experiences.

Likewise, Stryker (2017) explores the increase in visibility of trans people and suggests that the immersion of younger generations in different ways of culturally communicating through technology means that the 'self' is not so rigidly mapped on to the body as their elders might think. Thus, being a trans and/or non-binary person makes sense within this technological experience of the social world; the rest of society is having to 'catch up' despite there being a long history of gender variance. In addition, Stryker reminds us that there has been a change in how trans people are framed, moving from the personal, inward 'issue' dealt with in isolation, to being seen within a wider social context; this is a key point that we develop further. That is, fundamental to how trans people might be supported in an institutional setting is the shifting of the focus from the individual as presenting a set of concerns to the ways in which the social world constructs the 'problem'. Stryker uses the feminist tradition of making the personal political to expand this point in respect of viewing trans and non-binary identities as a positive challenge to dominant hierarchical and heteronormative ideas of gender. Identifying the touchstone of Donna Haraway's *A Cyborg Manifesto* - ground-breaking in exposing the stories we tell ourselves about gender so as to naturalise how we organise society and reproduction (Haraway, 2006, cited in Stryker and Whittle, 2006, p. 8) - Stryker explores the relationship between trans theorising and feminist work on gender. Due to the challenge being posed to fixed ideas of gender, trans studies are considered to be an extension of feminist theory (Kelly, 2018; Stryker and Aizura, 2013); alongside this, queer theory and queer theology have

become academic subjects in their own rights. The increasing number of young people embracing gender variance is, for Stryker, transforming society at large, from pronoun use and non-binary language to non-gendered fashions and systemic change in bureaucracy. Yet, as Stryker also notes, briefly, religious communities often believe they have a stake in protecting normative categories of gender and sexuality, which has encouraged an alignment of secularism[10] with postmodern 'gender ideology' and a reification of gender norms within religious positions. In particular, Stryker points to Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, a leading authority on trans identities and religion, whose award-winning work, *Omnigender: A Trans-Religious Approach* (2007), explores in depth Christian and other religious attitudes to gender.

The Legislative Framework

Matson Lawrence and Stephanie McKendry (2019) offer a clear guide to the legal framework under which higher education institutions (HEIs) must operate (with specific reference to universities in Scotland). The UK Equality Act of 2010[11] states that gender reassignment is a protected characteristic; significantly, this includes a broader definition of gender reassignment than one involving a medical process. Indeed, the medicalisation of transgender persons is widely challenged (Woolley, 2016; Stryker, 2017). Consequently, trans folk are not defined within UK law as persons who have undergone a physical and medical process. Under the Act there are four unlawful modes of discrimination: direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment, and victimisation. Trans people may also be entitled to 'reasonable adjustments' to ensure full participation in the workplace or educational institution. The UK Gender Recognition Act 2004[12] allows trans people to change their legal gender via a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC); at present, a GRC requires medical evidence of transition and incurs a fee. Subsequent updates to mainland UK requirements have made it possible to change the gender on official documents, such as a passport or driving licence, without needing a GRC;[13] although, non-binary

[10] We recognise that the use of term 'secular' is open to debate; for the purposes of this report, we are using it in a basic sense to mean not specifically connected with or bound by religion.

[11] The Equality Act 2010 is available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents Although the Act uses the terminology 'gender reassignment', this is considered unhelpful by many trans folk because it suggests changing gender rather than aligning gender and sex-based characteristics; 'gender confirmation' or 'gender affirmation' are preferable.

[12] The Gender Recognition Act 2004 is available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/7/contents

[13] This is not the case in Northern Ireland.

options have not been added, and in the former case a letter from a medical professional is still required. In educational institutions, therefore, it is good practice to facilitate self-identification on records and to make changing name and gender a simple process for students and staff. Higher education institutions are covered by the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) that identifies the responsibilities of preventing unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity, and fostering good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not (Lawrence and McKendry, 2019, p. 29). Even though, currently, there is no legal recognition of non-binary people,[14] HEIs are beginning to offer alternative options to 'male' or 'female' on documentation (Lawrence and McKendry, 2019), as well as offering multiple pronouns. Nevertheless, despite some progress, during this research participants have shared experiences with us that highlight the need for institutions to give further consideration to the collection and recording of gender-related information, including whether such information is necessary.[15]

The 2016 Report[16] to the House of Commons prepared by the Women and Equalities Committee sets out in some detail the need to address the structural, systemic, and cultural inequalities that leave trans people with higher levels of psychological distress. This Select Committee report states that half of young trans people and a third of trans adults attempt suicide. Further, in a 2018 YouGov Stonewall report, Bachmann and Gooch find that 41% of trans people and 31% of non-binary people have been subjected to a hate crime or incident because of their gender identity during a twelve-month period (Bachmann and Gooch, 2018a). In addition, 42% of LGBT students reported being afraid of disclosing their identity and 7% of trans students had been subjected to a physical attack at university because they are trans (Bachmann and Gooch, 2018b). Similarly, Lawrence and McKendry (2019) draw out from the Select Committee report criticism of the higher education sector for failing to fully support trans people, citing high levels of bullying and harassment of students who are trans. In this vein, we are attempting to partly

[14] Concerns have also been voiced about legislative ambiguity for intersex people (see Bauer et al., 2020).

[15] For instance, students who have identified as non-binary throughout their undergraduate degree have been restricted to male/female and Mr/Miss/Mrs/Ms options on applications for post-graduate study, or guest speakers and participants on a range of research projects have been asked for gender-related information when such data might not be needed.

[16] The 2016 Transgender Equality Report is available at: https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmselect/cmwomeq/390/39002.htm and the government's response to the recommendations in the report is available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transgender-equality-report-government-response

answer the call for HEIs to establish campus cultures where trans folk are safe and have the same opportunities to flourish as other students. 'At present', suggest Lawrence and McKendry, 'the experience of trans people engaging with education is not the empowering experience we would hope it could be' (2019, p. 12). Moreover, whilst the Gender Recognition Act 2004 was a significant milestone when it was introduced (Beardsley and O'Brien, 2016), its reliance on medicalisation is intrusive and out of date when compared with the legal acceptance of the right to self-determination adopted in other European countries (Stonewall, 2020); given this, it is incumbent upon HEIs to go beyond UK law in advancing equality for trans and non-binary staff and students.

Trans and Non-Binary Folk and Christianity

The broader literature dealing with religion and trans identities is evidence of disparate standpoints: some denominations and faiths understand and celebrate gender variations, whereas others adopt a more rigid approach to gender with the effect of alienating trans and non-binary people of faith. Whilst Christianity provides examples of the latter, there are also Christian denominations, and groups within denominations, that are more welcoming (see for example, Mollenkott, 2007; Stryker, 2017). Our project focuses on Anglican Foundation universities, and, thus, on the Church of England, which has publicly debated gender and sexuality in ways that compromise the belonging of people who identify under the banner of LGBTQ+ (Nixon, 2008; Sherwood, 2019). Autobiographical accounts of having a Christian faith and being a trans person offer insights into the interweaving of religious and transition journeys (Ford, 2013; Mann, 2012); this type of literature represents important narrative voices that challenge more rigid Christian positions on both gender and sexuality. In some cases, like Ashley Ford's account (2013), there is, in addition, a solid sense of commitment placed in Christianity as a positive faith; this resonates with the story relayed by one of our interviewees whose transition and faith journeys are entwined. Rachel Mann writes candidly about her transition, her sexuality, and her experiences of faith within the Church of England (Mann, 2012). Her participation in this project, along with that of Christina Beardsley, has deepened our understanding of the complexities of Church of England positioning, of the debates and the backlash, and the negative messages that filter out into the media and form the backdrop of the chaplains' role as a representative of the Church.

Chris Dowd and Christina Beardsley have undertaken research into the lived experiences of trans people with faith; in *Transfaith* (2018) they detail stories, both negative and

positive, of life in church communities. Covering some of the theological debates and pastoral needs of trans people, their volume is a valuable resource for chaplains, as it deals directly with matters of faith for trans people and highlights the wide variation in Church support and welcome. For example, The Gender Recognition Act 2004 allows the Church to marry trans people who have a Gender Recognition Certificate, if they are in a heterosexual relationship; however, individual clergy can refuse to do this as a matter of conscience. Dowd and Beardsley (2018) report encountering two different viewpoints about trans people circulating within Christian communities in the UK. One view is that trans people pose a threat to the Church (and such a position can be found in official Church responses). For example, given that the Church still opposes same-sex marriage, the 'threat' anxiety is bound up with the fear of condoning homosexuality, and, thus, as was raised by Rachel Mann in her interview, represents a significant contradiction in theological arguments: either trans people are recognised in their affirmed gender or the Church has undertaken same-sex marriage. In the case of transition following marriage, the Church of England does not advocate divorce: either it is condoning same-sex marriage for someone who has transitioned, or it does not accept their transition (Nelson, 2019). The second viewpoint comes from trans and non-binary folk who explore the possibilities for combining identity and faith in a broader social justice context. 'These two conversations are happening in completely different intellectual, cultural and theological spaces with radically different conceptions of what it is to be a person' (Dowd and Beardsley, 2018, p. 56). Interestingly, the positive accounts of contact with the Church in Dowd and Beardsley's research involved female clergy and, while we cannot be certain that ordained women are more likely than ordained men to be fully supportive of trans folk, it is possible that women's experiences of hierarchical and exclusionary discourses within the Church and the priesthood generates empathy with others whose very being puts them at risk of rejection. Several significant themes are attended to by Dowd and Beardsley including: what churches teach about gender and the related theological positions they draw; how trans people are welcomed, or not, into church life; and how trans people negotiate biblical passages. Usefully, in the context of our project, their text includes pastoral and ritual resources that can be used for Trans Day of Remembrance, for example.

Equally instructive is the edited volume *This is My Body* (2016) in which Christina Beardsley and Michelle O'Brien focus on the voices of those who are part of the Sibyls

(a UK group that supports trans people particularly in their spiritual lives).[17] This edited collection articulates the positioning of the Church of England from the point of view of the trans person, as well as detailing some trans lived experiences of the Church. The book was borne out of a sense that conservative Christians (more precisely, the Evangelical Alliance) claim to offer a definitive Bible-based perspective on transgender that ignores the experiences of Christian trans men and women. The editors state that being granted access to the life stories of trans people is 'like walking on sacred ground' (p. 5); a notion we discussed as part of this project. Beardsley and O'Brien's volume is positioned as part of a project of reconciliation between individuals and the Church; thus, it provides our research with a snapshot of the alienation experienced by trans people within the Church, accompanied by a synopsis of the work required from the Church to establish full and unconditional belonging for trans folk. We, therefore, reflect this understanding in our conclusion and recommendations.

Beardsley and O'Brien (2016) provide significant detail about what trans identity means; in particular, encompassing a broader set of situations than social or medical transition. Terminology used to describe identity can be both liberating and oppressive, depending on the perspective of the trans person (p. 52); hence, those supporting trans folk need to be flexible and sensitive with their language, following the lead of the trans person themselves and being willing to ask questions regarding preferred terminology (see also Stryker, 2017, for a set of definitions and a cautionary note about imposing labels). Jasmine Woolley's contribution to the collection explores the social construction of gender, and argues that transgender, existing on a continuum, challenges received constructions to a greater or lesser degree depending upon the extent to which boundaries are pushed. Some trans people will fully transition; others will retain the performance of their assigned gender, with various degrees of expression of their trans identity. It is vital that anyone involved in supporting trans folk understands that medical intervention is only one possible pathway. Underpinning the argument that Church culture is ill-equipped to shift understandings of gender, Beardsley and O'Brien argue that tropes and symbols – the maleness of leadership and of the divine – fundamentally stymie openness to the experiences that lie outside of these ecclesiological norms. It is from this foundational level that intolerance springs. The outcomes of a workshop developed for Sibyl members

[17] See http://sibyls.gndr.org.uk/

to explore issues around spirituality, gender and sexuality indicate that trans people often experience rejection or conditional acceptance within organised religion (despite shifting attitudes towards gay and lesbian clergy); they expressed a sense of 'dismay' that official religious discourses are closed to the complex interplay between sexuality, gender and spirituality (p. 19-20). The Sibyls workshop experience was offered as a resource to the Church of England as part of 'Shared Conversations',[18] but the offer was not accepted.

Woolley (2016) considers whether trans people should 'come out' - in the same way that gay and lesbians have increasingly embraced the visibility of their sexuality - which may involve a double process: disclosing trans identity and then, for some folk, proceeding to medical gender confirmation surgeries. Trans people who wish to live with a hidden trans history are, and feel, vulnerable to constant 'outing'; this concern is borne out in one of our interviews, whereby the participant's persistent fear of being 'outed' has curtailed career and other lifestyle aspirations that carry the risk of exposure. There is, therefore, a tension between choosing whether to 'blend back into society' (Woolley, 2016, p. 35) or whether to have a public identity as a trans person, even where the latter is increasingly achievable. In our research, the dilemma posed by the desire to live without the trans label (sometimes through fear of negative reactions) and the desire to speak openly and advocate for social change came to the fore. This dilemma is a personal path trodden by individuals; the direction taken is travelled in a social and historical context where trans identity is the site of cultural and political struggles over what it means to be human (Stryker and Whittle, 2006). For young people, despite having more information and support at their disposal, the trans person's journey is often terrifying, and invisibility is necessary for some. Secrecy, though, along with the difficult path to self-acceptance - often contained within the need to be accepted by friends, family, and society - can have devasting effects on mental health (Woolley, 2016, p. 38). Social and familial acceptance can also be transitory, which entails the repeated revisiting of conversations and an uncertainty of integration and approval; this leaves the trans person with the precarious task of negotiating mixed messages.

In addition, Woolley (2016) examines the ways in which trans identities are created out of binary gender constructions. Consequently, for trans or gender variant people

[18] 'Shared Conversations' was a process undertaken by the Church of England to discuss theological positions around sexuality and gender.

to experience full belonging, there is a need, she argues, for the gender binary to be deconstructed. This deconstruction may be the crux of what both Rachel Mann and Christina Beardsley call the 'culture wars': the perception, by some, that this deconstruction is a threat to their own gendered belonging (see also Dowd and Beardsley, 2020). Woolley shows that far more needs to be done to raise levels of understanding about gender variant identities. Structural issues can be barriers to progress, such as being asked to tick boxes to identify gender on official documents. Whilst some organisations are making progress (and this includes some universities), the Church of England is caught up in a symbolic, theological and doctrinal debate that needs to be resolved in order for structural issues to be addressed satisfactorily. We have witnessed the negative consequences of attempting structural change that is not accompanied by a matching symbolic and theological change, leaving ordained women, for example, as anomalous.

Mercia McMahon (2016) uses Marcella Althaus-Reid's queering of theology (whilst also critiquing it via a trans lens) to explore how the Church of England rotates its positioning on the decency/indecency axis. Trans people find a more consistent welcome if they present a model of heterosexuality in their affirmed gender, or celibacy if their sexuality varies from heterosexuality. Whilst the Church maintains that it is possible to separate aspects of a person, this serves to dissect identities for the sake of alignment with theological and doctrinal traditions. A practical theology framework - see, discern, act - borrowed from Althaus-Reid (2000), is applied, by McMahon, to the development of trans-inclusive theology. McMahon points the reader to *Trans/Formations* (Althaus-Reid and Isherwood, 2009): a collection of narratives that incorporate lived experiences of trans Christians and theological discussions; a vital form of seeing. It is important for our project, therefore, to highlight McMahon's wariness of the agenda-setting power of outsider theologians (even as allies) and to ensure that trans-inclusive theology is cognisant of the need to open the doors to trans people who are theologians to begin to fill the lacuna in the theological literature: we address this in our recommendations.

The Higher Education Context

Comprehension of the experiences of LGBTQ+ students in the UK is minimal, partly because monitoring systems are inconsistent amongst institutions (Grimwood, 2017), and because the gathering of information on the lived experiences of trans people may be especially challenging through 'tick box' monitoring methods. In particular, Michelle

Grimwood's (2017) research highlights inadequacies with the reporting and monitoring of discrimination of LGBTQ+ students in UK universities. She reveals that students perceive staff and tutors to be less likely than other students to speak out against homophobic, biphobic or transphobic behaviour. Yet, the National Union of Students survey (NUS, 2014) finds that trans and non-binary students are more likely than cisgender students to face harassment and bullying at university: only 20% of trans and non-binary students surveyed felt safe in the university environment and 50% had considered leaving their course (compared to approximately 25% of cisgendered students. See p. 26 of the NUS report). As Rhiannon Storrie and Poul Rohleder (2018) note, research into trans people's experiences of higher education is limited, despite there being evidence that discrimination is widespread. Their research explores the lived experiences of six students who are trans, and who discover that university spaces can be both empowering and hostile. Significantly, they learn that levels of support in universities are variable, and policies do not always match the needs of trans students. Recommendations arising from their research emphasise the need for universities to adopt proactive ways of supporting trans students; however, our project identifies a persistent reliance on limited policy making in HEIs, which is a potential area of deficiency. Trish Hafford-Letchfield et al. (2017) similarly highlight a lack of research into the experiences of trans students and argue that work to mitigate inequalities in higher education is now urgent. Their review of international research reveals a picture of complexity and multiple barriers for trans students in post-compulsory education leading to long-term detrimental effects on lives and careers.

Furthermore, a 2017 US study (Wolff et al.) finds that, unsurprisingly, trans and non-binary students attending Christian universities where the beliefs are 'non-affirming' experience high levels of emotional trauma, due to the construction of incongruence between faith and gender identities. Thus, campus experiences can result in feelings of invisibility, whilst many trans students simultaneously suffer high levels of bullying and assault. Anglican Foundation universities in the UK are not the same as US Christian campuses, and many are (in theory) entirely affirming of LGBTQ+ identities; nevertheless, there is a cautionary message here: institutionalised faith (in Church and in higher education) that propagates fixed views on gender and sexuality has the potential to be highly damaging to students. Hence, Joshua Wolff et al.'s research stresses the importance of embedded support systems on campus; their recommendations focus on proactive measures to

ensure trans and non-binary students are fully included in campus and university life. Alternatively, a UK study (Falconer and Taylor, 2017) looks at the 'queering' of HEIs within a discourse of progressiveness, and the impact that this has on students with a religious faith who also identify as queer (an umbrella term denoting a range of identities outside the heteronormative binary). In this respect, higher education may afford an opportunity of freedom for exploring sexual-religious identities that religious institutions may be unable to accommodate. Consequently, both the US and UK studies noted above resonate with our project; yet, both neglect the place of university chaplains. Our project aims to address this lacuna, asking whether the chaplaincy is a place that can support the journeys of gender identity, whilst negotiating both positive and negative religious discourses.

Returning to Lawrence and McKendry's (2019) work, they provide insight into how trans and non-binary staff and students can be supported by HEIs in Scotland. Their publication is a practical toolkit that dovetails with our findings and recommendations, particularly as it mirrors some of the institutional issues that have been raised by our interviewees and our survey. They succinctly outline the context in which our research also sits:

> There is evidence that experiences can be extremely negative, and the [trans] population encounters myriad and continual barriers to employment and education across the sectors. The issue is not simply one of ignorance or an unwillingness to change within institutions, but also that practitioners are unsure of how to support trans individuals (p. 9).

Our task, then, is to provide a more detailed analysis of how chaplains as university practitioners can contribute most effectively to the network of supportive systems and relationships that need to be established within universities to eradicate the barriers noted above. Much of the research into the experience of trans folk in college and university education has taken place in the US; nonetheless, the US research concurs with the Scottish study indicating that trans students are much less likely than cis students to flourish and to have a sense of belonging in educational institutions (Lawrence and McKendry, 2019). Equally, (and this is something that we have hypothesised during this project) some trans and non-binary folk do not find their needs are best served by being part of the umbrella LGBTQ+ group.

Lawrence and McKendry (2019) identify several solutions that could address the above concerns: some of these revolve around the systems used by institutions, namely that they should be flexible enough to allow name and gender changes easily and should cater for more than two genders to be acknowledged. Other solutions include recruitment policies, bespoke support arrangements for trans and non-binary folk, physical changes to facilities, and the holding to account of people who display discriminatory behaviours. On this last point, we find Sara Ahmed's (2019) work invaluable for its critique of complaint procedures and the anti-inclusive practices within some universities. Ahmed's research reveals that there are frequently barriers for complainants, such as minimisation and slow or non-responsive communication, which impede the work of diversity staff and champions. Other studies, cited by Lawrence and McKendry (2019), suggest the need to develop and leverage spaces where positive interactions can be fostered. We address the notion of space – what is considered safe space and risky space – later in this report.

Significantly, Lawrence and McKendry's (2019) research reveals that a quarter of trans students and staff feel unable to disclose their trans identity to their institution. We agree that there are substantial issues relating to disclosure for trans people; furthermore, we recognise that not all people who have transitioned, or have been through a process of having their gender confirmed, wish to permanently carry the label 'trans'. Indeed, one of our interviewees sees themselves as having a trans history but not a trans identity (a subtlety also discussed by Lawrence and McKendry). Consequently, we affirm that research involving trans people needs to acknowledge the difficulty of reaching people who do not wish to live out a trans identity, which, in turn, presents the probability of pointing research towards 'out' trans people. This complication is reflected further on in our report where we discuss the issue of visibility versus invisibility, whereby either of these options presents safety or risk depending upon how and whether a person aligns themselves to the trans label. While this labelling can be problematic in terms of exclusion and stereotyping (Beardsley and O'Brien, 2016); equally, O'Brien suggests that political visibility is somewhat lost where the trans label is eschewed (p. 67).

The study by Lawrence and McKendry (2019) also describes the context in which inequality of access to HEIs for trans and non-binary students may come about. If primary and/or secondary school experiences are negative and disruptive, traditional outreach projects for universities aimed at those in tertiary education may miss trans people (who, for example, may leave the education system due to bullying and/or lack of family

support). This context resonates with some of our own findings, including an interviewee who discusses the lag in education and career attainment connected with the transition journey, which has resulted in a sense of being decades behind in achieving the usual life and career goals. Likewise, bullying and harassment in the workplace is a further theme in Lawrence and McKendry's research that chimes with some of the stories we collected through our survey. Lawrence and McKendry conclude that trans and non-binary people have individual specific support needs and, as such, flexibility, understanding and a proactive culture need to be embedded within institutions. We additionally apply this concept to the chaplains, who are in a position to build support out of relational activity rather than having to operate through confining systems.

As mentioned above, young people may perceive of university as their chance to escape the expectations of gender at school, in their hometown and/or family life, and, hence, leaving home to study may coincide with the start of their social (and maybe physical) transition. Without adequate support, however, university might not become the freeing and affirming experience hoped for, which may hamper educational as well as personal progress (Windust, 2021). It is not our intention in this report to detail the processes, options and challenges of a transitioning process, but we would signpost chaplains (and all other relevant staff) to the Lawrence and McKendry (2019) study as a toolkit for anyone supporting trans and non-binary students and staff. One of their major recommendations is for universities to have a process of developing policies that include all areas of institutional life. Our research is responding to this recommendation by focusing on the chaplaincy, though we are exploring more deeply the relational and the political, since policy making is only one (often flawed) part of the process of establishing a culture in which trans and non-binary folk have the same opportunities to flourish as cis staff and students. Additionally, a Lawrence and McKendry (2019) recommendation particularly worth commenting on in the context of our research is the promotion of the increased visibility of trans and non-binary folk on campus, as well as the continual raising of awareness of gender diversity in general. Our project included endeavours at awareness-raising, using the platforms presented by Trans Day of Remembrance (20th November), LGBT+ History Month (February) and International Trans Day of Visibility (31st March). We discuss later in the report our reflections regarding these activities and the ensuing contestation of visibility and invisibility, which highlighted tensions surrounding understandings of safety and risk.

Research examining the discourses used in policy documents in universities that aim to support trans and non-binary folk reveals problematic language that may serve to reinforce dominant binary gender identity (Dirks, 2016). It is crucial that policy-making is critiqued, since universities with policies of diversity and inclusion risk seeing these as a panacea, thereby weakening the imperative for continual action driving culture change. A reading of policy documents from the perspective of marginalised groups who are othered in their own culture challenges the ways in which trans and non-binary people are framed as in need of protections; albeit written with good intentions, the protective framing of policies maintains the marginalised status of those perceived to be different. During this project, we experienced this dynamic; protection, however well-intentioned, served to generate silence, as we discuss subsequently. Policies and campus culture, therefore, need to guard against the tendency to adopt the normalcy/deviant and vulnerable victim frameworks. The language in official university policies is often, according to Doris Andrea Dirks (2016), a demonstration of 'genderism'; that is, a devaluation of gender non-conformity and the privileging of normative binary gender. Hence, this leaves only a narrow discursive space in which to discuss gender variance; this is usually found within LGBTQ+ circles, spaces and times specifically carved out for this purpose. Actions to protect trans people on campuses may arise from the assumption that trans folk are seeking 'safe spaces' and that it is only through the intervention of authorities that spaces deemed unsafe can be made safe (Dirks, 2016). We discuss this notion further in this report and remain mindful that 'safe space' is a contested concept. At the same time, though, during the 'bathroom debates', trans women were framed as posing a danger and trans men were rendered invisible. These competing discourses - of trans folk being vulnerable and trans women being a threat - create marginalisation. Dirks (2016) points out that the vulnerability discourse competes with the less frequently expressed discourse that trans people are resourceful change-agents; some trans folk are not afraid of being outed, but seek to trailblaze, challenge, be visible and be heard as trans people. We want to emphasise, however, that while this does not mean that trailblazing individuals do not have emotional and well-being concerns requiring support, it does mean that systemic approaches should avoid a deficit model: rather than focusing on the individual presenting 'issues', the focus should be on the surrounding context that generates difficulties for trans and non-binary people. Additionally, Dirks (2016) challenges the frequency with which LGBTQ+ networks and societies are given the task of mediating between the vulnerable and resourceful discourses: framed as problematic, they are also tasked with

finding solutions, but this is impossible given the limited institutional power held by such groups.

Literature about Chaplaincies

Religion at university has become an increasing focus of research over the last ten years (Aune et al., 2019) given the widespread assumption that universities have a secularising influence on students. The persistence of religion challenges this assumption (see, for example, Clines, 2008; Weller et al., 2011; Guest et al., 2013; Guest, 2015). Relatedly, Kristin Aune et al. (2019) suggest that there remains a gap in understanding what chaplains do in their day to day lives on campuses. Though we are focusing in this project on the support needs of trans and non-binary students and staff, our project contributes to the research on the role of university chaplains, and how they perceive themselves in relation to their universities (and to the Church of England as Anglican chaplains). Usefully, Aune et al. provide a review of the literature focusing on chaplaincies (although they state that much of that literature is observation rather than empirical research). Within the literature, several models of chaplaincy are suggested, such as 'parish', 'sacramental' and 'denominational' (Cartledge and Colley, 2001). Simon Robinson (2004) identifies five models of chaplaincy: the 'collegiate model' (as found in universities such as Oxford and Cambridge); the 'church model' (as if the chaplaincy were a local church serving a parish, which is the university); the 'liberationist model' (a model developed in the 1960s and 1970s of the chaplain as activist challenging social inequalities); the 'Waterloo model' (building relationships on the move); and the 'student services model', which, he states, is 'increasingly being explored by the most recent universities in which the university has a clearer say about the functions of chaplaincy' (Robinson, 2004, p. 42; also cited in Aune et al., 2019). Miranda Threlfall-Holmes (2011) offers a further set of models: the missionary, the pastor, the incarnational or sacramental, the historical parish model, and the prophetic model.

Given the variety of approaches adopted by university chaplains, Aune et al. (2019) simplify the categorisation as follows: chaplains are located within a religious tradition and serve those who belong to that tradition or are located within a tradition and serve everyone on campus. This latter category describes our cohort of interviewees. Whilst often supporting those who are at the margins in the university context, the literature indicates that Anglican chaplains also operate from the margins of the Church (Aune et al., 2019). We address this idea of marginality in our interviews. Nevertheless, chaplains in

Anglican Foundation universities are considered an integral part of university life (Aune et al., 2019), and this was raised as a salient benefit by the interviewees in our project. The chaplain's situatedness is of paramount importance in the context of providing pastoral care and helping to negotiate the systems of the university; in fact: 'the Cathedrals Group chaplains described an arrangement through which chaplains and student support work together to provide a more comprehensive welfare support structure for students' (Aune et al., 2019, p. 72).[19] Additionally, based on evidence garnered from a student survey, the above report hints at chaplaincies being a place of welcome for LGBTQ+ students (Aune et al., 2019). Our research seeks to unpack the meaning of welcome and to ascertain whether the support offered for trans and non-binary students and staff needs to be substantially different or developed.

Aune et al. describe the background to the Anglican character of many chaplaincies in a variety of universities; this is instructive for our project which focuses on chaplaincies at Anglican Foundation universities (those that have a historical/formal link to the Church of England). Even so, our discussion regarding the tensions this link gives rise to – namely that of establishing a culture of inclusivity and equality for diverse gender and sexual identities, whilst representing a religious organisation with a history of exclusion - is pertinent to a wider group of chaplains. By contrast, Aune et al. state: 'there is a popular perception that Church of England clergy are more inclusive in orientation than some other denominations, and this perception of inclusiveness would be attractive to university managers' (p. 24). Within the context of our project, this is an intriguing statement. Nearly all of the chaplains we interviewed positioned themselves as inclusive in practice and in theology; yet, this reputation of inclusiveness requires investigation, since the Church of England is publicly 'at war' with itself (in the words of two interviewees who took part in our project) regarding gender and sexuality. This apparent disparity between the openness of Anglican chaplains and the negative messages that are emanating from the Church of England is woven into our project.

One indicator of a university's level of support for chaplains, Aune et al. (2019) suggest, is to be found in the provision of training and development; accordingly, the majority of the chaplains they encountered do access regular training. In relation to our project, the

[19] An association of universities in the UK, most of which were founded as teacher training colleges by the Church of England, the Methodist Church, or the Roman Catholic Church. There are currently fifteen member institutions (fourteen in England and one in Wales); see https://www.cathedralsgroup.ac.uk/

opportunity for training is a significant part of the landscape for the discussion regarding chaplaincy support for trans and non-binary students and staff. We discuss later the recommendation that regular and specific training about gender diversity and what it means to be a trans person is essential, for chaplains and others.

Bearing in mind that their cohort includes representatives of several faith groups, Aune et al. (2019) asked university chaplains about their primary aims and functions and pulled out six categories: pastoral, provision of religious practice and promotion of interfaith understanding, being a presence (the use of visible 'signs' of spirituality), being prophetic (which seems to conflate social justice, cosmic justice and morality), relationship building, and mission. This final aim is, interestingly, cited more by chaplains in the Cathedrals Group of universities than those at other universities. Furthermore, the literature they draw on also implies that chaplains are translators and interpreters with a mission-oriented purpose, assisting communication between the Church and the 'world' (Aune et al., 2019). Our research troubles this notion, and we suggest that the bridge metaphor between the Church and the secular world of the university does not take into account the liminality that is hinted at by the chaplains in our study, or their need to sometimes resist that which the Church represents (more than one chaplain in our project describes themselves as a 'rebel').

Consequently, with the exception of the notion of 'mission' (which was not a feature in our discussions with chaplaincies), the above models and categories are confirmed in our research into the ways in which trans and non-binary students and staff are (or could be) supported by chaplains. Our research confirms that the aims of being a listening ear in times of crisis, of seeking to support the well-being of anyone who approaches the chaplaincy, and the more general aim of providing spiritual support across the university are commitments shared by the majority of chaplains. These aims are a helpful springboard for our exploration into their specific manifestation for the benefit of trans and non-binary students and staff. In particular, the paramount goal of being present (cited by Aune et al., 2019) helps us to locate one of our themes: later in the report we discuss the use of 'signs' and visibility, which are harnessed by several chaplains to signal an inclusive positioning. Correspondingly, the provision of a 'safe space' for all students and staff is highlighted as part of the function of being present and is overlaid with the concept of providing space to encounter the numinous. We explore this fully and critically further on in our report. The prophetic purpose named by some chaplains in Aune et al.'s (2019)

study includes issues of social justice: this seems to be a vital component of the chaplain's *raison d'être* when discussing supporting trans and non-binary students and staff. Curiously, only 6% of the participants in Aune et al.'s research stated that the primary aim of chaplaincy was to build relationships. We found amongst our interviewees the theme of relational working and emotional labour was more prominent when the focus of the conversation was on support for trans and non-binary students and staff; this may suggest a shift in emphasis when a minority group requires tailored provision.

Students, Aune et al. (2019) report, believe that chaplains should be approachable, open and non-judgemental, good listeners, compassionate, and have integrity of faith. The ability to be non-judgemental is crucial because of the diverse university population that the chaplain serves, and the different customs of living that they encounter. Significantly, Aune et al.'s study finds that some students believe chaplaincy offers unique support not found in other student services (however, the number of respondents in their research is a small proportion of the overall student population). Their report confirms that chaplains tend to spend most of their time in pastoral activities, and with students who are considered marginalised. This positioning of chaplaincy as a marginal space, operating in the gaps, is reflected in our project, with several chaplains discussing how much of their time is spent with a small number of students; this concurs with other studies that find chaplaincies to be used intensively by a small fraction of the student body (Cartledge and Colley, 2001). One problematic finding of Aune et al. (2019) that matches a strong theme in our research is that of the perceived relationship between chaplaincy and the Christian Union: staff and students may think that chaplains are aligned with the Christian Union and this perception can hinder relationships if the theological positioning of the latter is more conservative than the former; this becomes especially problematic with regard to the location of belonging for Christian trans and non-binary folk on campus.

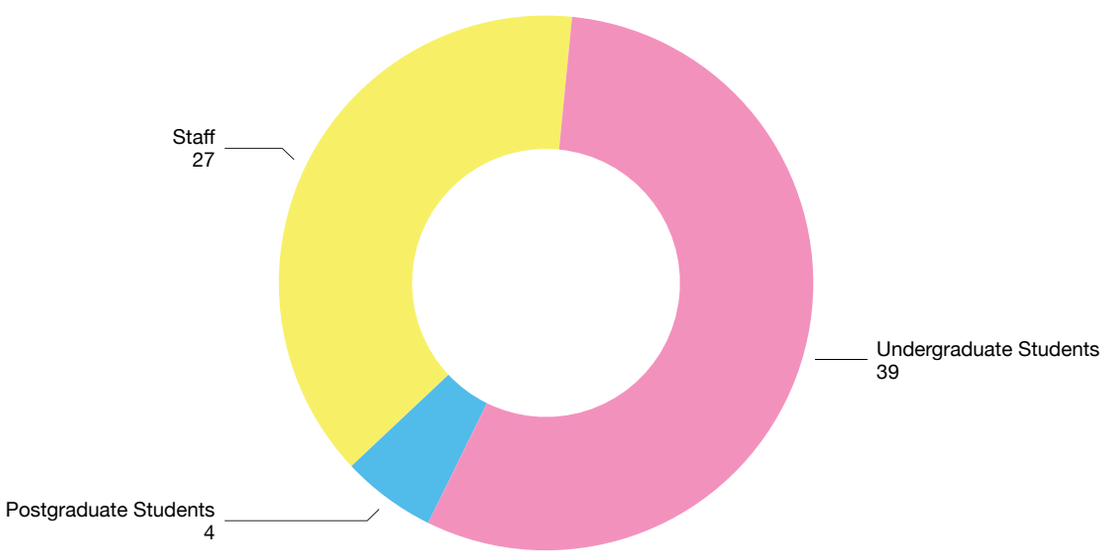
Central to the chaplains' role is student support, however, and chaplains may have to navigate the challenge of assisting both conservative and liberal students. Furthermore, in this context, as in many others, they occupy a rather liminal position with respect to university management. Chaplains have a formal role in offering pastoral care, but also function more informally in facilitating cross-referrals to other student services and in serving the general culture of the institution, including pastoral support of staff. Constructively, 'Their embeddedness in the staff structure also ensures they are more keenly aware of what's going on; as one manager comments, "the chaplaincy doesn't exist

in a closed bubble"' (Aune et al., 2019, p. 84). Equally, chaplains have relationships beyond the university that are notable factors in establishing wider care and signposting networks. Our research offers more nuanced detail about the local diocesan context and church provision that chaplains negotiate and within which they build connections.

Findings Summary

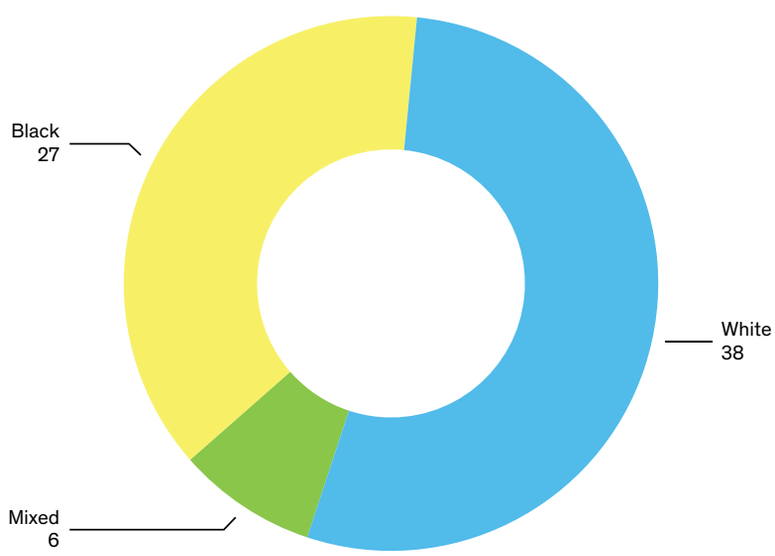
The Survey

As a key part of our project we conducted a survey amongst trans and non-binary staff and students at Anglican Foundation universities to broaden our reach and to support the information gathered in a series of interviews. Many respondents to the survey were from York St John University. Whilst we initially targeted Anglican Foundation universities in the Cathedrals Group,[20] other institutions participated due to 'snowballing'; for example, King's College London provided the second highest number of responses (with contacts offered by an interviewee). Other institutions that fell outside our original parameters have been included below to demonstrate the potential of widening the original research project beyond Anglican Foundation universities. Given the variations in chaplaincy resources on university campuses (Guest et al., 2013; Aune et al., 2019), there is scope for further research to explore the wider picture of support for trans and non-binary staff and students.



[20] For a list of member institutions, see https://www.cathedralsgroup.ac.uk/who-we-are

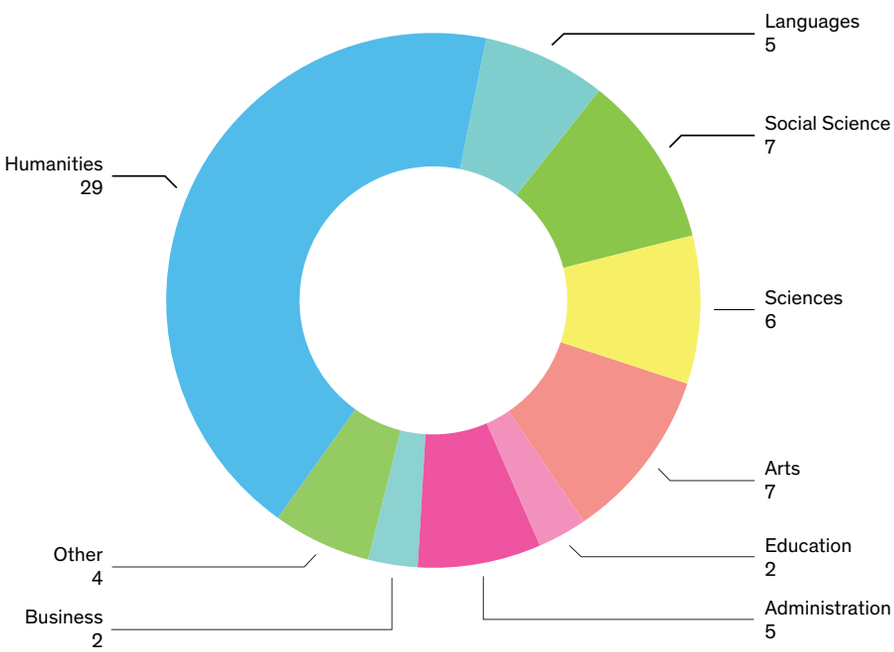
The total number of respondents to the survey, over a twelve-month period, was 70 (no questions were made obligatory, so some answers were left blank). Student responses (n=39) are mostly from full-time undergraduates, though a significant minority are postgraduates. Staff respondents (n=27) are mostly on full-time employment contracts . The responses are reasonably balanced between staff and students, though students are in the majority, which is to be expected given that students outnumber staff at universities. More than half the total number of respondents are under 25, which, whilst reflecting the predominant age range of undergraduate students, might have deeper significance: there are clues within the interviews that suggest generational differences in the understanding of non-binary identities. We allowed an open response to the question of ethnic identity and the majority of respondents, by some margin, describe themselves as White or Caucasian[21] (n=49). Other answers included Black, Black Caribbean, Asian, Chinese and variations of mixed heritage. Similarly, those who describe themselves as English or British numbered 49.[22] Other responses describe a wide variety of nationalities including Japanese, South African and American. Eleven responses describe European nationalities (with a small number of dual British nationality).



[21] This is a term that was used by some respondents, though we note it is problematic.

[22] Of those who described themselves as British 38 also described themselves as White, 6 as having a mixed ethnicity and 3 as Black. The proportion of BAME respondents is lower than the general population and this is unsurprising given the problematically lower percentage of BAME students and staff at some universities.

Forty-two per cent of respondents place themselves in the Humanities (either as students or staff).[23]



A key part of the biographical information asked of the respondents focused on gender and sexuality. We assumed both that the number of trans and non-binary identities would be small and potentially difficult to target with a questionnaire, and that identities are fluid and expressed in multiple ways; so, we widened the call to all who identify under the LGBTQIA+ banner. There are, nonetheless, some nuances that need to be acknowledged regarding the grouping together of a wide range of non-traditional genders and sexualities under a homogenising (political) banner and this was raised by some interviewees as potentially obfuscating trans and non-binary people's concerns (see also Stryker, 2017). We, therefore, ensured the survey offered ample opportunity for individuals to be specific about their identity and the issues they wished to raise; furthermore, collecting

[23] The rest of the cohort was spread amongst other subjects or administrative departments: languages (n=5); social science (n=7); sciences (n=6); arts (n=7); education (n=2); administration (n=5); business (n=2); other (n=4).

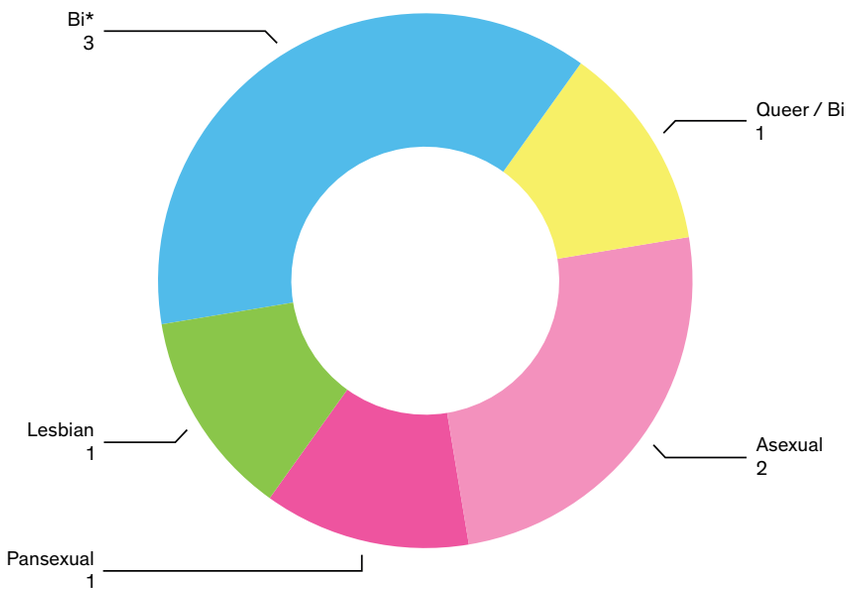
information from a range of LGBTQIA+ people allowed us to begin to explore some of the differences between gender identities and identities based on sexuality.

Given that the number of trans people in the general population is proportionally small, the number of responses from this group is relatively high (n=12). The survey attracted 10 non-binary respondents. Forty-seven respondents identified themselves as cisgendered. Those who answered 'male' or 'female' were included in the cis group; however, this may mask a trans history for some who choose not to identify with a permanent trans label. People who have transitioned, or who are transitioning, wish to be perceived in diverse ways: we understand from the interviews that whilst some trans people are vocal and visible, others favour living in 'stealth' (where this is possible) and do not necessarily subscribe to the trans label. Both questions about gender and sexuality were open-ended to ensure the full variation of self-identification could be entered.

The responses to the question about sexuality are informative. We recognise that trans and non-binary people may identify with any sexuality and it is important to discuss the intersectionality this represents; this was raised in the interviews, revealing a complexity around whether trans people are doubly marginalised if their transition generates, or is perceived to generate, a non-heterosexual identity (and, we suggest, for the Church of England, sexuality is regarded as more problematic than transitioning gender). In this survey 22 people identified as bi; this is a less visible identity, particularly within faith communities (Shepherd, 2019), and, yet, our survey suggests this is a substantial group of people. Gay (n=10) and lesbian (n=9) were proportionately comparable, as were pansexual (n=5), queer (n=5) and asexual (n=3); 12 respondents identified as heterosexual. Cross-referencing the sexuality and gender questions reveals a very wide variety of sexual identities amongst trans and non-binary people.[24]

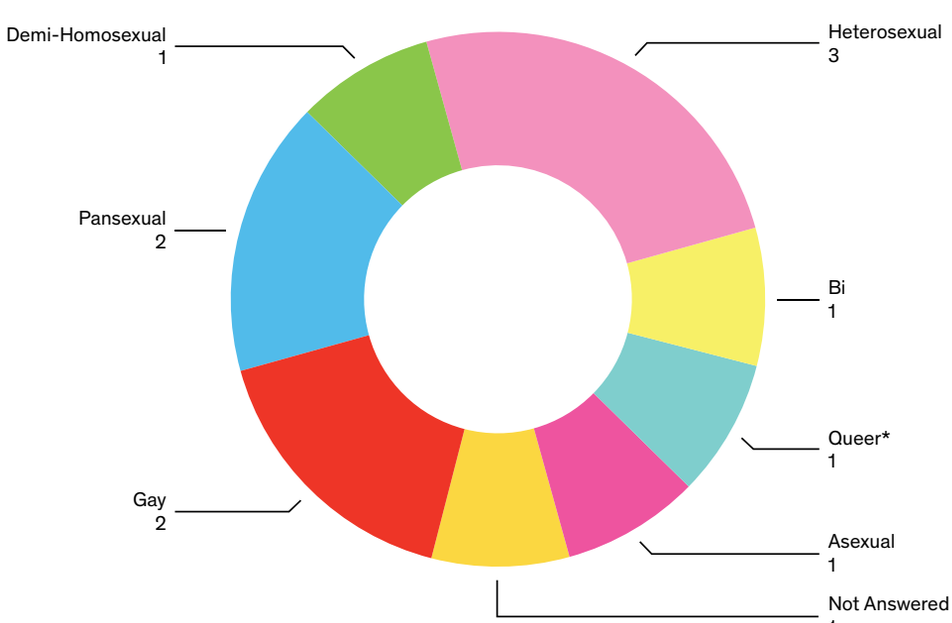
[24] See https://qz.com/1230638/omnisexual-gynosexual-demisexual-whats-behind-the-surge-in-sexual-identities/

Answers from non-binary respondents



*This includes a 'questioning' non-binary

Answers from transgender respondents



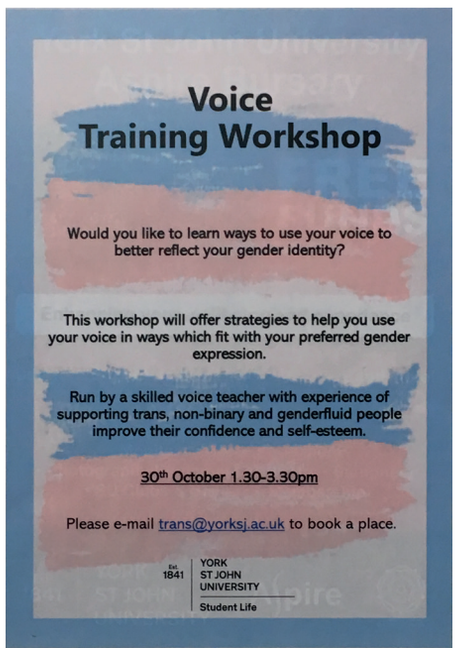
*Non-binary trans

The above set of variations suggests that it is imperative to understand the diversity of gender and sexuality, which resists simple categorisation. This growing range of sexual identities presents a substantial challenge to the Christian models of binary gender and heterosexuality, even where trans people ostensibly 'fit in'. Moreover, some trans folk may identify as non-binary and be more fluid in their understanding of their own sexuality. Amongst the non-binary respondents who answered the question about sexuality, none identified as heterosexual; they may come across significant barriers in 'fitting in' to a Christian framework, because they necessarily trouble heteronormative and binary representations. Further discussion is needed to understand the extent to which non-binary identities challenge Christian (or Anglican) doctrine differently from trans people who identify with a gender.

A primary intention of the survey was to identify the issues and barriers that are faced by non-binary and trans people whilst at university. We have witnessed a growth in students transitioning whilst at university and a growth in the numbers of students identifying as non-binary; both sets of students face a number of hurdles given the binary construction of documents and spaces. (For instance, many institutions have developed procedures for changing names and asserted the right of all to use the bathrooms of the gender with which they identify, but this is an insufficient response: non-binary persons do not identify with a male or female gender; transitioning students may become reluctant to speak in seminars if anxious that their voice does not match their gender identity; and trans men may still be in need of period products, which are mostly located in the women's toilets.)[25]

Thirty per cent of the total number of respondents noted that they had faced some problematic issues at university, because of gender or sexual identities. Separation of the trans and non-binary respondents from the cisgender ones reveals a mixed set of experiences. Seven out of 12 trans people stated they had encountered identity-related issues at university. Themes raised in the comments included name changing difficulties, misgendering, deadnaming (where the pre-transition name is used), transphobic comments, power dynamics within LGBTQ+ groups that marginalised trans people, and a lack of gender-neutral toilets on campus (including noting the inadequacy of referring trans people to the disabled toilets or telling non-binary people to use the toilet of the

[25] In response to these issues, we worked with others at York St John University to organise voice coaching and to have period products available outside of, rather than inside, toilet cubicles.



gender with which they identify).[26] Amongst non-binary people, 5 respondents stated they had encountered barriers to inclusion: poor university ethos established in the top tiers of institutional management, issues around pronoun use, a lack of understanding of non-binary identities, resistance to inclusive language, and homophobic and biphobic attitudes. Although the numbers of respondents are relatively small, it remains telling that more than half of the trans people who took part in the survey have experienced difficulties in their university life relating to their trans identity. Some of the issues are systemic (such as name changes) and some are attitudinal (including outright discrimination, as well as lack of awareness and understanding). All of these barriers are important for chaplains to explore in terms of their position as a support, and as an influencer who can help change the culture of a campus, where required.

The broader question concerning the main issues on campus for LGBTQ+ people attracted varied comments, but several themes were repeated and are instructive. Staff and university hierarchies need to be knowledgeable, sensitive, and understanding in order

[26] Similarly, while many intersex persons identify with a gender, some do not and will find the 'use the toilet of the gender with which you identify' statement unhelpful. Rather than identifying toilets by gender, signs indicating facilities - urinals, cubicles, period products - may be more useful and inclusive of non-binary and intersex persons, as well as trans folk.

to create an inclusive environment. Administrative systems and the physical spaces on campus need to be integrated into trans and non-binary inclusive policy. Mental health and counselling services are mentioned several times as vital (and not always adequate), including the pastoral support that can be given by chaplains and other well-being staff. Isolation and alienation are noted: even where there are changes in policy (and law), this does not necessarily change a person's sense of belonging. One comment raised the tensions between conservative Christians on campus and the LGBTQ+ community; another noted the tensions with secular trans-exclusionary groups (referred to as 'TERFs': Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminists); a further respondent highlighted the discomfort experienced (and not addressed by universities) when graduation ceremonies take place in cathedrals where presiding bishops have openly opposed homosexuality. Visibility of support is held to be vitally important: more signposting, more posters, and pro-active staff and student groups. These issues can be organised into systemic and cultural groupings; although, it is apparent that systems are generated out of attitudes, knowledge and understanding, and then serve to perpetuate those attitudes. The interviews cover much of this interweaving in respect of the capabilities of chaplains for exerting influence at multiple levels to bring about institutional change.

Where the respondents seek out support shows a spread across most of the options offered. The highest proportion (22%) access the on-campus LGBTQ+ group (bearing in mind more than one choice could be made on the survey). Nevertheless, some comments highlight the potential for alienation of trans people in LGBTQ+ groups, and though the numbers are too small to generalise, this concurs with comments in the interviews about challenging the homogenising effect of this umbrella acronym: LGBTQ+ groups are not universally seen as supportive of all genders, expressions and identities. The second most popular source of support is a friendship group. Chaplaincy was chosen by 8% of respondents. The interviews paint a similar picture: chaplains interact in significant ways with a limited number of people. What needs to be borne in mind, therefore, is that the high value of chaplain support for a small group of people might render the widening of engagement with chaplaincy unfeasible or undesirable, if it entails dilution of essential support to a few. Despite the small numbers who access its provision, chaplaincy does rank above other official services; it is, therefore, clearly held to be a salient piece in the jigsaw of support networks within HEIs. Opinions relating to the experience of support offered by institutional hierarchies are mixed, ranging from ineffective to very supportive.

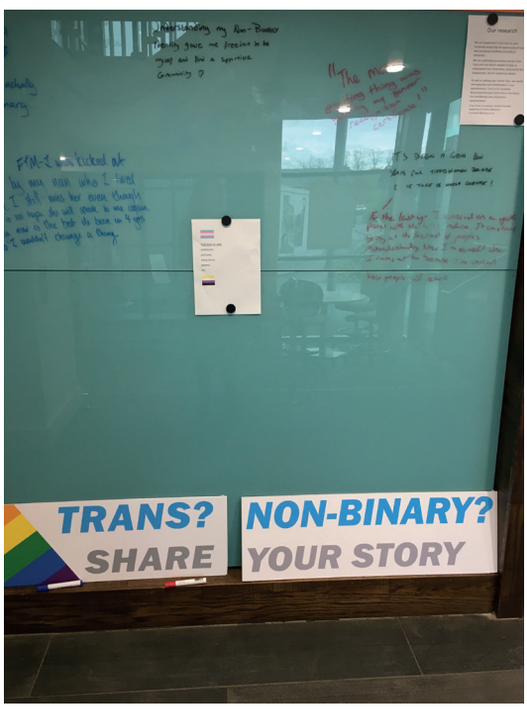
The comments associated with encounters with chaplaincy are largely extremely positive. Key descriptors suggest that the chaplaincy is experienced as a safe space, welcoming, affirming, accepting, time-rich in support and a place where a listening ear is found. However, one person noted the weight of the Christian framework, and an accompanying fear that only a single version of the 'truth' is acceptable; similarly, another inferred that they were guarded with chaplaincy in general, because they assumed they would be subjected to judgement. Hence, the positive descriptions mirror the intentions that are described in the interviews with chaplains. The caveats revolve around whether the Christian faith of the chaplain (and an awareness of Christian doctrines and beliefs) introduces judgement, or, at least, the suspicion of being judged; this negative perception is a key area that chaplains attempt to address and forms a considerable part of the interview discussion.

Approximately 26% of the respondents state that they belong to a faith community; of these, a third have encountered negative attitudes within their faith communities on the basis of their gender or sexual identities. The comments in this respect mostly reference the Christian church (but not all) and describe being rejected, not welcomed, forced to leave a community, bullied, alienated, not accepted, and/or met with a lack of understanding. One comment referred to attempts at conversion therapy:[27] being 'prayed straight'. These remarks underpin our conversations with chaplains regarding signposting to local churches, interrogating what is considered 'safe space', and tackling the risk of rejection in faith communities (including campus-based groups, such as Christian Unions): this will be discussed later in this report.

Participation through Displays

A key aim of our project is to increase visibility and awareness of trans and non-binary experiences on campus, through the hearing of trans and non-binary voices, by creating opportunities for them to contribute thoughts, feelings, and stories about their lives at university (and beyond) to supplement the interviews and survey. During two significant periods (Trans Day of Remembrance and LGBT+ History Month), we enlisted the cooperation of library and Student Union (SU) representatives to set up displays inviting

[27] The UK's Minister for Women and Equalities, Liz Truss, has announced plans to ban conversion therapy (see https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-sets-out-plan-to-ban-conversion-therapy), but campaigners are concerned that legislation will be delayed by consultation (see https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-57059459) and the Evangelical Alliance opposes the ban (see https://www.eauk.org/news-and-views/the-challenges-around-conversion-therapy).

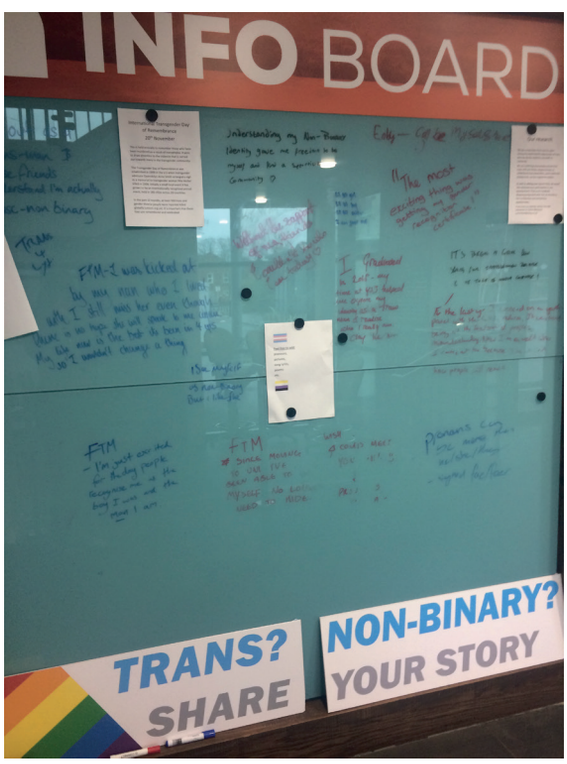


input: writing, pictures, poems and so on. To ensure there was provision for private contributions as well as public ones (which could be anonymous, pseudonymous, or named, as chosen by the contributor), we provided a box for those who preferred to share more privately. Two other university chaplaincies that have participated in this project also offered to experiment with displays, with input from students.

In line with the discussion above, we were attempting to amplify trans and non-binary experiences and struggles in a public way; thus, raising awareness and challenging norms of discretion and suppression. We were keen to be informed by trans and non-binary folk who act as agents of change and look for public opportunities to challenge, share and speak (Dirks, 2016). Though these displays were low-key, there was significant resistance to the notion that trans and non-binary folk would contribute so publicly (by writing on a board or pinning up a poem for example), even when doing so anonymously. SU representatives were highly protective of the trans and non-binary community and initially objected to such a visible call for contributions, despite the agency lying with any potential contributors. Considered alongside Dirks' (2016) policy discourse analysis, this objection to visibility seems to be an example of the vulnerability discourse being propagated (albeit with good intentions) on campus, by student bodies who seek to protect a marginalised

group. Furthermore, the concerned opposition we encountered demonstrates that the SU building, where we sited the first display, is not considered to be a 'safe space': the opposition revolved around the dual risks of 'outing' contributors and of exposing their contributions to trolling and abuse (there are times when parts of the SU building are unsupervised and the display boards could be defaced). In other words, there were worries about policing the space to prevent backlash. After several conversations with members of the SU in which we negotiated safety, ethics, and discourses of vulnerability, the boards remained in place for a month. While a couple of negative additions needed to be erased, many revealing and positive comments were added; this confirmed our hypothesis that trans and non-binary students are keen to take advantage of the opportunity to share their stories openly. Moreover, an initially reluctant SU representative was surprised and pleased by the overall positive outcome and has expressed a wish to repeat the exercise on a larger scale.

Subsequently, we placed a smaller display in the library space during LGBT+ History Month; again questions were raised about the public nature of the display and the potential for exposing vulnerable individuals. It is apparent, therefore, that the fear of a public and open opportunity to witness and amplify the voices of trans people is an admission that there are inherent dangers in campus spaces, but, rather than tackling this dynamic, there is a tendency to set a protective boundary around trans and non-binary people. The unintended consequence of this approach to safeguarding is that trans and non-binary voices are silenced or mediated through compliant channels. It seems that there remains a lack of nuanced recognition of the agency of marginalised groups, of their ability to speak for themselves and act so as to challenge hegemonic forces (Dirks, 2016). Overprotection can have the inadvertent effects of restricting access to power for trans and non-binary folk, maintaining invisibility and sustaining genderism. Our project thus offers an opportunity for chaplaincies to invest in discourses of resourcefulness in trans and non-binary people (without denying that there are times when trans and non-binary folk need support in particular ways: support needs to engender agency).[28]



[28] In the quotes fae and faer are used as pronouns, a reference to mythological creatures that stand outside the gender binary. See https://askanonbinary.tumblr.com/post/707174025 24/pronouns-i-have-encountered-in-no-particular-order

"Without the support of my friends, I couldn't be who I am today."

"pronouns can be more than he/she/they – signed fae/faer"

"The most exciting thing was getting my Gender Recognition Certificate."

"I am happy the uni promotes non-binary inclusion, but I still feel invisible."

"You've got this. Keep being strong."

"I was kicked out by my nan who I lived with. I still miss her even though there is no hope she will speak to me again. My life now is the best it's been in 4 years, so I wouldn't change a thing."

"I'm out as a trans man. Close friends understand I'm actually masc-non binary."

"For the last year I worked on a youth panel…being at the forefront of people's misunderstanding. Now I am careful who I come out to because I'm worried how people will react."

"Understanding my non-binary identity gave me freedom to be myself and find a supportive community."

"Since moving to uni, I have been able to be myself. No longer need to hide."

"It's been a grim year for trans women because of media coverage."

Interviews with Chaplains

We interviewed 14 university chaplains and chaplain assistants. One group of chaplains at the same university agreed to take part in a focus group, which provided an opportunity for dialogue between colleagues; this was useful in exploring team dynamics relating to messages coming from, and the positioning of, chaplaincy in the support and welcome offered to trans and non-binary staff and students. In the focus group, there was a previously unspoken understanding that views about gender and sexuality were shared amongst the group. By contrast, other participants in interviews suggested that, whilst there are on the whole good working relationships between colleagues, there is sometimes a wide difference in positioning of individual chaplains working within the same university.

The interviews were semi-structured: questions covered the relationship chaplains have with the institutional Church and its official and unofficial messages regarding trans and non-binary identities, as well as good practice within chaplaincies and an invitation to share any significant narratives to provide nuance to the discussion. In addition, we discussed gaps in knowledge and ways in which chaplaincies could do more to work with trans and non-binary students and staff. Approaches to sexuality were often raised in the interviews, and we recognised overlapping themes that relate to the broader LGBTQ+ umbrella. For most chaplains, the numbers of trans and non-binary staff and students that they support tends to be extremely small, but this does not diminish their importance; they shared rich stories of relational work. One interviewee identifies as a trans person working in the chaplaincy and this provided insight into how chaplaincies can offer a ‘safe space’, provide emotional and spiritual support, and act as a proxy church in cases where local churches are seen as ambivalent or unwelcoming of trans and non-binary people.

Several themes emerge from the interviews that are instructive for identifying good practice and setting out recommendations for chaplaincy support of trans and non-binary people on campus. In this section, we focus on the ways in which chaplains work to resist negative Church messages; the broader campus environment within which chaplains work; and the specifics of relational work and good practice highlighted in the interviews.

Church Positioning and Debates

The chaplains interviewed for this project have a unique position in their universities owing to the perceived universal nature of their ministry. As one chaplain explains: “Church

of England chaplains have that kind of state religion thing . . . that says we're here for everyone. That's kind of at the baseline of our understanding of ourselves as priests really, so we bring that into chaplaincy; that we're here for everyone". This 'baseline' generates some complications that led to generative discussion in the interviews: to welcome everyone requires a negotiation between opposing positions and beliefs, and some chaplains make explicit decisions about how their chaplaincies characterise 'inclusivity', which we discuss later on.[29] Whilst chaplains see themselves as offering support to the whole of the university community, several interviewees note that, in reality, they have relational contact with a limited number of people. Numbers aside, the positive impact of chaplaincy is high for a few people each academic year (see Aune et al., 2019, p. 101).

Aune et al. (2019) articulate the specific nature of Anglican chaplaincies on campuses as:

> an institutional expression of an Anglican orientation to ministry, which is inclusive, pastoral and conceives of the campus as analogous to the parish. The fact that universities with no formal church links or that have links with free churches often still have an Anglican as lead chaplain is a reflection of the Establishment status enjoyed by the Church of England (p. 24).

The key word 'inclusive' is assigned a particular place within Anglican ministry: its meaning may be that Anglican chaplains are to minister to everyone on campus in general terms, or it might imply more focus; namely, to engender welcome for those people with identities that are problematised by some Church discourses (where LGBTQ+ is used as a shorthand for this focus). In the context of our project, and certainly when chaplains refer to being inclusive during the interviews, the inference is that work is being done to welcome and include LGBTQ+ people.

Shrewd chaplains recognise that there is a clash of culture between the university and the Church created by the social change around attitudes towards gender and sexuality that has not been matched by the church hierarchy; this opens a profound gap that chaplains are required to negotiate. The importance of Church of England positioning on trans

[29] A further discussion would be useful to explore whether and how 'inclusivity' is perceived by churches and by chaplains as encompassing Black and minority ethnic (BAME) people. University chaplains may experience footfall from overseas BAME students, but British BAME people may associate the Church of England with racism. Further work is needed to explore the lack of diversity amongst chaplains themselves which may impact their reach and whether this relates to the Church of England's notable problem with BAME inclusivity. See https://www.churchofengland.org/media-and-news/news-releases/bbc-panorama-programme-church-racist

and non-binary identities (and LGBTQ+ identities more widely) was foundational in the interviews with chaplains. Debates within the Church of England revolve around binary discourses of purity and pollution, text and authority; these binaries produce polarising arguments (Nixon, 2008) that leak out as ambivalent or even hostile messages around gender variance and non-heterosexual sexualities. One interviewee encapsulated the position of chaplains as being caught between the Church's slow process of change and the culture of the university:

> I think the Anglican Church is fairly unsure and working on it. It's a work in progress, but it being the Anglican Church it will probably take about twenty years before they come to any firm conclusions, meanwhile the rest of us have to deal with it on a daily basis, don't we?

Similarly, another chaplain discussed the requirement for the Church to be fully welcoming and hospitable, but expressed disappointment about how this is unfulfilled: "I find it quite gruelling where the Church chooses not to be [welcoming]". Further, on the debate around a liturgy of welcome for trans people (which we discuss more fully later), this chaplain added: "I think it's slightly odd having a service of welcome that's not incredibly welcoming". This summation of the problem is echoed in Christina Beardsley's discussion surrounding the process of developing a liturgy-based service; the process for her has damaged the spirit of unequivocal welcome.

A sense of a 'burden' being carried was expressed in one interview, as the Church finds itself 'stuck' on matters of gender and sexuality. As one chaplain explains, ambivalent messages from the Church can damage trust in chaplaincies: "I think part of the problem is the fear, people not coming because of the fear of judgement by us. What's the word? A projection. That we would judge and say, you know, it's wrong". A further chaplain concurs with this notion of needing to rehabilitate the image of the Church and its approach to gender and sexual identities:

> I'm constantly coming up against other people's preconceptions and very valid preconceptions because of what they've seen in the media or their own experiences, or their own reasons for leaving the Church, or whatever it might be. And just trying to sort of redress some of that and try to communicate to people that not all of the Church is like that . . . you won't get any judgement from me. I'm just trying to do my little bit to heal some of that, maybe.

Chaplains, therefore, recognise that there is work to be done to mitigate understandable assumptions of judgement and rejection based on religious belief; most chaplains participating in our project identify this as an ongoing part of their work.

Ambivalence and ambiguity from the Church is perceived as damaging by some chaplains. On the institutional culture, interviewed chaplains report that there is no straightforward understanding of the Church's positioning, mainly because there is confusion within the Church itself. As one chaplain states: "I don't think the Church of England knows what its position is to be honest"; another describes the Church as 'tribal', with fault lines running along theological groupings that play out in the local church landscape. Thus, anger emerges as a theme amongst the interviewees when reflecting on the ambiguity of the Church regarding inclusivity, alongside a wish for more clarity about progress with institutional arrangements and debates. Inclusivity is hampered by Church messages that are exclusionary, as one interviewee states: "my views have changed over a while. And then changed a bit more as I became a bit more angry about the way the Church was failing to be open and inclusive". Hence, the messiness of the Church's position and the equivocal messages emanating from the institution are a common frustration cited by our interviewees. When asked about alignment with discourses in the Church, one interviewee states: "I find that an interesting and a very complicated question. Because which party line? Because there is enormous diversity in the Church of England and in the whole of Christendom". This multiplicity of views and positionings may present a difficult landscape for students and staff of faith who are trans and non-binary, and for chaplains who are acutely aware that they represent an institutional Church that has a damaged reputation around its ability to offer an unconditional welcome.

One chaplain was especially clear on the distinctions that need to be made within the LGBTQ+ umbrella, and, accordingly, asserts that Church positioning and the theological arguments should not be homogenised:

> "I think the Church's attitude towards lesbian and gay people is a different issue [to trans and non-binary] really, but obviously there are overlaps . . . So, in terms of trans and non-binary people, I think at the moment the Church is, well it's always running to catch up with these things, but I think it's doing slightly better than it is with LGB issues. Because, I suppose firstly because there's so little in the Bible. So, we've had to sort of feel our way without getting our knickers in a twist about interpretations of different texts. The Church of

> England has just in the last month or so, as you'll know, brought out liturgies for [trans] people who are wanting to renew their baptismal vows with a new name, which I just think is fantastic. I think it's not before time. You know, it's really brilliant they've finally done this, and it's an amazing resource and people I know have been waiting for this to happen and they're actually going to be able to feel honoured as who they are in the Church for the first time . . . I think for non-binary people I suspect the Church hasn't even started to think about what might be possible and what might be necessary.

Other chaplains also express the view that the Church has different approaches to different identities represented within LGBTQ+ spectrum; this is a significant understanding, since trans and non-binary staff and students may well have support needs that differ from other groups associated with the LBGTQ+ banner. The Church's position (official and unofficial) on how to welcome trans and non-binary people can be obfuscated by a homogenised approach to LGBTQ+ matters. As one chaplain explains, whilst a good deal of discussion takes place regarding sexuality, they had not heard anything from the diocesan bishops regarding attitudes towards trans people; overall, the Church has taken some steps towards a specific welcome for trans people, but this has not been without controversy. Later in this report are accounts - given by Rachel Mann and Christina Beardsley - of the process that the Church has been through for establishing guidance on the use of liturgy; they explain the compromise and backlash involved. Chaplains may need to continually seek clarification about official and unofficial positions on trans and non-binary people within the Church, and to separate these from the more general debates about LGBTQ+ belonging.

In one interview, referring to a bishop's awayday focusing on LGBTQ+ interests, the chaplain explained that the general internal view expressed is that the Church *is* attempting to be inclusive; however, there remains suspicion that this optimism actually cuts short difficult discussions and leaves biases and prejudices unexplored. For this chaplain, the process of teasing out the Church's multiplicity of views regarding LGBTQ+ folk will be lengthy and exasperating; nevertheless, the longevity of these discussions and debates could be a strength, if it results in more considered outcomes:

> The general feeling [at the awayday] was that the Church was quite inclusive [laughs] generally about everything. So actually, nobody did raise any issues... I think it's because it's too tricky to deal with and they're trying to find a way

> through . . . it. Which is what I think on the whole. So, I'd rather they spent a bit longer and did the process well.

Although this comment refers to general discussions about LGBTQ+ matters in the Church, it signals a tension between the perceived rapidity of social change that chaplains are required to process within a university (bearing in mind that, from the perspective of LGBTQ+ people changes have been remarkably slow), and the conversely much slower pace of the Church, making some topics of debate seem intractable. This tension creates a liminality for chaplains, positioned between two cultural responses.

In terms of consolidated support from the diocese, one chaplain emphasised their sense of separateness from the wider institution of the Church, often going long periods without contact from the hierarchy responsible for chaplains. This separation generates a sense of marginality and a distancing from churches' core activities:

> "It's a common thing within the Church of England that chaplains aren't kind of frontline . . . the whole drive is towards people leading parishes, as well as stuff about leadership, you know, I think people who are chaplains aren't really considered at all, as anything within the diocesan structures.

Interestingly, this chaplain was content to be at the margins, and, in fact, did not feel the need for diocesan support regarding LGBTQ+ inclusion. Furthermore, the notion of peripheral existence is echoed by other interviewees: "diocese aren't bothered about what we do". Nevertheless, chaplains still sense that certain public actions (such as supporting Pride) risk attracting opprobrium from some Church quarters (in one interview, the chaplain referred to a church counter demonstration that had taken place alongside the local Pride event). On the whole, however, chaplains enjoy freedom from doctrinal alignments, as evidenced in this interviewee's statement: "Do we feel we have to toe a particular party line theologically? No. I don't think we do. I don't feel that I do. Because the way that the Church of England ordination is worded is so brilliant, because we don't have to actually say we believe anything".

Freedom from constraint gives chaplains a sense of rebelliousness, as attested to by several of our interviewees. This combination - of existing on the periphery of an organisation and having the liberty to be a rebel - enables chaplains to fulfil an expectation and a need to be liberal in their outlook. As this interviewee avers: "I think it's very, very difficult to be in chaplaincy and be, let's just say, quite closed minded. Because by its very

nature you are working with people who have no relationship whatsoever to the Church". (In fact, one interviewee claimed that chaplains at Anglican Foundation universities are likely to experience more freedom in terms of their presence on campus than chaplains at other universities). Hence, there is a sense amongst some chaplains that being marginal and unencumbered with official Church discourse creates the space for them to establish a different tone and direction, one of unqualified inclusion; as one chaplain jokingly remarks: they have "no problem with being heretical", or, as another explains:

> I have to say that part of being in chaplaincy is, I mean it is my vocation, but it also feels to me a bit safer to be within chaplaincy with a university employing me, rather than a diocese. Because I would not agree with some of the Church's lines around these things.

Whilst not unheard of, it appears to be rare that a chaplain is placed in a position where their conscience leads them to openly defy the Church, but thinking about what might happen if this were to be the case, an interviewee speculates: "I had wondered about what would happen if I did go against the Church's teaching, on my own conscience, as a Christian as I understand myself to be a Christian at this university, what would happen?" In this vein, several chaplains discussed the possibility of conducting same-sex weddings in university chapels, which raises compelling questions about the positioning of chaplaincies as liaison between two institutions with contrasting approaches to themes of gender and sexuality, and the lengths they might envisage going to in the name of inclusivity.

Churches and 'Safe Space'

Manifestation of the gap between university culture and Church culture is also prevalent within dioceses and is, therefore, a relevant subject for chaplains who often mediate between students of faith and local churches. Some university chaplaincies are located within dioceses that are ambivalent about matters of gender and sexuality, and others are more significantly 'polarised', in the words of two chaplains. Yet, it would be inaccurate to suggest that all dioceses are perceived, by chaplains, to be presenting a problematic set of messages. For instance, one chaplain states that their diocese is inclusive, except for the issue around the two integrities[30] (which disallows female priests from some parishes).

[30] See the Church's Five Guiding Principles at https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-02/5%20Guiding%20Principles.pdf

We contend, however, that the Church's inability to fully resolve the issue of women and the priesthood is fundamentally related to continued debates about sexuality and gender variance: if female priests are excluded from a diocese, it cannot claim to be inclusive. Inconsistencies in acceptance of gender and sexuality are evident when individuals in the Church equivocate over female priests but not, for example, over gay priests.

One chaplain states that evangelicals in the diocese (bishops and individual churches) discuss matters of sexuality without reference to gender variance rendering the position on trans persons opaque. Nevertheless, this same chaplain feels that, on balance, the diocese promotes inclusivity. One interviewee, with a mixture of optimism and tension, describes the current situation thus:

> We go on Pride in a dog collar, you know, that's . . . yes, but so many churches are doing that now. It's going to come, it's going to come, in the Church of England. It's just terribly slow. But it's interesting isn't it that in the university, it's explicit, it promotes that inclusivity. You know, then, as a chaplain I'm in the position of where do I sit with my conscience in this?

Clearly, individual chaplains are examining their own positionings with candour and with the understanding that they represent an institution that is ambivalent about its messages.

Consequently, there is consensus amongst our interviewees regarding the indispensability of gathering local knowledge of worshipping communities that are considered to be a 'safe space'. One chaplain relays, in general terms, the negative impact of persons finding themselves in churches that do not support their identity: "Actually, a lot of [students who talk to me] have been in those kind of evangelical[31] churches and something's happened to them, where their confidentiality has been abused or they've been told stuff they've found really hurtful". Likewise, another interviewee outlines the high stakes of not understanding the local church landscape: "I also know of some extremely damaging, one or two, one in particular, church that has damaged people. You know there's been abuse

[31] Part of the definition of 'evangelical' published by the Evangelical Alliance includes a commitment to the Bible as a revelation of 'God's objective truth' and the interpretation of biblical texts is used to define gender and sexuality. 'Conservative Evangelical' is a term used to indicate a stricter adherence to scriptural texts (that is, not liberal). The evangelical standpoint can mean a clash with progressive and secular ideas about gender and sexuality and is often used as a shorthand for a Christian position that opposes LGBTQ+ identities. See https://www.eauk.org/assets/files/downloads/Evangelicalism-a-brief-definition.pdf

issues and things". Hence, this chaplain has worked hard to collate knowledge of local churches that are welcoming to LGBTQ+ people. In keeping with a relational approach to their role, a further chaplain is keen to share knowledge of 'safe' churches, attending chapter meetings for example, and ensuring that there is understanding of which churches are authentically inclusive:

> The ones who come and talk to me have faith and if they are LGBT, they tend to want to talk about that and you know, stuff. But yes, so I listen. And if people are asking about good places to go to church, I will tell them places I know are safe . . . Quakers is a safe space.

Some dioceses have multiple options for LGBTQ+ friendly churches, but others, as one chaplain assistant points out, have none at all. Where the latter is the case, for some students the chaplaincy is then perceived as a church community, placing even greater responsibility onto the chaplaincy to be a safe space (discussed in more detail shortly). Two chaplains report that they signpost LGBTQ+ students to their respective city's cathedrals, for example; these are seen as friendly places, but with a tendency to avoid conversations about personal lives. Furthermore, one of these interviewees also notes that the suffragan bishop is perceived as trans-exclusionary, and the diocese, in general, is described as 'very hard'. These are intriguing clues as to the effect of the bishop on the culture of a diocese: the reputation of the bishop stands as a weathervane for discerning the likely temperature of a church's welcome. Similarly, associations are made between the worship style of a church and the (im)probability of receiving a warm welcome. For instance, lively, charismatic churches that appeal to a younger base (such as the Christian student population) tend to be evangelical, and, thus, are often perceived to be the least inclusive. Conversely, there is the potential for LGBTQ+ students of faith to anticipate positive receptions at local churches that leave them unprepared for negative encounters. According to one chaplain: "The Church is perceived as nasty. The opposite is also true. People assume they're going into a friendly welcoming environment to everyone, there'll be a welcome for them as LGBT, and just go. There isn't. And [they] are quite shocked and hurt by that". When asked if they often found themselves picking up the pieces, the chaplain's reply was emphatic: "Yes, very much. Yes".

Chaplains, therefore, are required to provide an interface between students and church-based faith that mitigates these discriminatory encounters with worshipping communities. Their signposting role is vital in helping LGBTQ+ students to make informed choices about their local place of worship, as this interviewee makes clear:

> Lots of people, because it's the zeitgeist or something I don't know, will say 'oh we're fully open and welcoming and tolerant of everyone' but actually they do have a theological issue. And you only find that out by default further down the line and I am so, I just feel like there are some people who've already quite possibly had so much damage done to them that I really, really don't want to add to that.

From this comment it is evident that 'inclusivity' is a popular label that does not always reflect the underlying ethos; if a trans or non-binary person scratches the surface, they might find beliefs and attitudes that are not affirming. Significantly, then, official Church positioning is not the only discourse that chaplains engage with; equally, 'hidden' views and attitudes within local churches can prevent belonging for trans and non-binary students (and staff) who find themselves attending an ostensibly welcoming church. Furthermore, it is not an easy task for a chaplain to counter discriminatory messages that circulate within churches, as this experience reveals:

> In our support of one student who heard at Church, in fact there's two, who heard at Church that this is all very wrong, it's culture gone mad. In one of those cases it was done by someone in their 80s, the sermon that was preached at the front, and you know, the student wasn't very happy. And I spoke to the priest, the incumbent, and I said, 'oh it seems odd because your church has lots of people who are LGBT'. And he said 'yes I spoke about being inclusive' and I said, 'do you not think, if someone's explicitly said it's wrong, do you not think you should explicitly say something that's different to kind of correct that?' and he said 'no, I'll just talk vaguely about inclusion'.

This interviewee goes on to explain that, learning from the above situation, their chaplaincy aims to provide resources that can be used to point to different theological positionings, on the grounds that it is essential to explicitly rebut exclusionary messages.

Chaplains are, thus, well aware that local churches represent a range of positions regarding LGBTQ+ people. Frequently, the concept of 'safe space' comes to the fore in the

interviews to describe churches that are known to be welcoming of trans and non-binary people. In particular, as one chaplain elucidates, they can recommend suitable places of worship because they have personal relationships with local Christian leaders and know which churches have damaged and abused LGBTQ+ worshippers. Likewise, another chaplain describes attempting to engage proactively in dialogue with local churches:

> “I’ve talked to churches and we’ve arranged mornings where we’ve talked about [LGBTQI+] issues, to try and see if we can tease out people’s responses and so on. So that’s always been something I’ve been keen on but actually it’s pretty hidden, in my experience, in a lot of parish churches.

In essence, therefore, most of the interviewees understand that local knowledge is paramount for signposting staff and students to churches where they would be most welcome, whilst simultaneously acknowledging that teasing out beliefs and attitudes underlying a veneer of inclusion takes effort; it is, nevertheless, a crucial aspect of the role of chaplaincy to indicate safe and supportive spaces for trans and non-binary staff and students of faith.

University and Church Cultures

The different cultures of Church and university, especially those universities that are visibly motivated towards inclusion, may clash when they meet within chaplaincy, as this chaplain describes: “I think there’s a bit of a tension between the Church of England and it’s rather stodgy stuck confusion about this issue. And the ethos of the university, which is very, very proactive”. As a result, one chaplain perceives their role to be that of a ‘double agent’: a pedagogical role that involves educating the university (student bodies, staff groups and so on) about the motivations and beliefs of Christians who are assumed, by those of other faiths and beliefs, to be counter-cultural in their attitudes to gender and sexuality. In accordance with the discussions above concerning unhelpful vulnerability discourses, this chaplain’s approach is to turn the spotlight back onto the attitudes of conservative Christians, rather than focusing on measures to protect trans and non-binary people from harmful Christian discourse. Thus, this aforementioned chaplain seeks to promote understanding of views that appear anachronistic in the university environment:

> “I think quite a lot of what I’m doing is helping people in the university community to understand better how people in faith communities think. Because what I know is that a lot of people now really quite misunderstand

> where Christians particularly are coming from. And that from my point of view when I'm decoding that I'm not necessarily supporting those faith communities. I'm trying to get our community to understand how to communicate more effectively with a group of people who think and operate very differently to them. Because people's understanding of the Church and what it feels like to have a faith, all that stuff is now so minimal that that in itself creates misunderstanding if you like. So, I see myself these days, certainly in this role, as a bit of a bridge builder. Not entirely in the favour of faith communities particularly but just helping everyone to try and understand what's going on if people don't particularly come from a faith background.

In other words, this chaplain is framing the negative, culturally out of sync, Christian discourse as the problem that needs to be understood. The support mechanism at play here is the use of bridge-building to address the discourses that generate unsafe space, instead of advising trans and non-binary people to avoid such spaces (though this is not to negate the latter strategy).

Challenges to discourses circulating in both university and church environments are raised by a chaplain and a student who is trans, especially language that produces insider/outsider identities. This chaplain understands that the use of specific words indicates the spaces being created, stating: "Being tolerant isn't the same as actually accepting, if you see what I mean. So, I think what most places are working very hard at being is tolerant, which is a start. But it's not the destination really, I think. The destination actually is just encountering people as themselves".

It is of fundamental importance, therefore, to examine the types of discourse that are legitimised by the language that is used (albeit with good intentions). As this chaplain points out, there is a profound difference between an approach that is tolerant (which still problematises people's identities) and one that aims to dislodge normative constructions. Language was similarly highlighted by a chaplain who expounds on their intentionality to be seen as a person who will be welcoming: "Just to make sure in what I do and in who I speak to I'm always modelling acceptance and, 'acceptance' sounds very patronising, I don't like that word. Just inclusion and hospitality and welcome to everyone". The interruption in the flow of speech here to clarify the caution around the word 'acceptance' signals sensitivity to the function of words in building insider/outsider boundaries: these are difficult linguistic patterns to break, but this chaplain identifies a need to be vigilant

against boundary-making discourse. We revisit this challenge to language and discourse later in the report.

Some chaplains critique the problem of privileging the needs of one group over another in different ways. In one instance, a volunteer was turned away, because of their conservative views on matters of sexuality. With acknowledgement that those appointed as chaplains and those who are active volunteers within chaplaincy have a deep impact on the developing culture of chaplaincies, the chaplaincy in this example made a deliberate decision to develop an LGBTQ+ inclusive culture. Conversely, some chaplains worry that an overriding stress on LGBTQ+ support leaves other students of faith excluded as an unintended consequence, as this chaplain explains:

> Ok so we only appoint chaplains who are very clearly positive in their support of the LGBT community. Great. But now you've created a very kind of one-sided looking [environment] . . . so how does that chaplaincy then support conservative evangelical Christians? So, in that set up of chaplaincy, the needs of the LGBT community have taken precedence over the needs of a chunk of the faith needs in that place. So, what happens to our protected characteristics and freedom of speech?

This interviewee is reluctant to conceive of the term 'inclusivity' as applying only to the inclusion of marginalised LGBTQ+ people: the accrual of meaning around this term is being problematised. Similarly, a further chaplain flags problems surrounding the meaning of 'inclusivity' stating: "we don't want to alienate [conservative Christians], I mean that's one of the pitfalls of trying to have an all-inclusive community. How do you include everybody whose views are incompatible?" Undoubtedly, there is a complexity here that chaplains need to think through. A full discourse analysis is beyond the scope of this report; however, the above questions place a marker for further exploration in which chaplains themselves may have much to offer in their function as mediators of the meaning-making that language generates. At times, then, the bringing together of Church and university discourses within the thinking space of the chaplaincy might create frictions or obfuscate meaning and chaplains may need to continually examine their role in the accumulation of meaning-making, whilst being critically attentive to the discourses that are thereby supported, and to what ends. The knotty issue of whether creating 'safe space' for one group of people necessarily results in diminishing support for another group features in several of our interviews; a deeper consideration of the extent to which support needs become mutually exclusive would be instructive.

Resisting Negative Church Messages

An urgent need to undo, or mitigate, the negative messages associated with the Church positions on gender and sexuality is felt keenly by chaplains, as a core part of their work: "I think as chaplain or as any representative of the Church, people sort of watch you to see what you do, who do you talk to, how do you respond to them". As a further chaplain concurs: "Unfortunately, a collar is a mixed blessing. I think sadly, I think the Church has created this. I think often LGBTI students initially see me and assume things, assume views that I will have. And actually, are guarded before they've even spoken to me". There is, then, a perceived need to resist the assumption that chaplains are aligned with negative Church positioning; this is recognised in the interviews as slow relational work, which can be combined with more immediate proactive ways of signalling a welcome to trans and non-binary people (and LGBTQ+ folk more generally).

Participation in the 'red-letter days' that are relevant to trans and non-binary people is a practical and visible activity that some chaplaincies make a priority. As one interviewee explains, these events are opportunities to establish an ethos: "Things being, visibly being in favour, so going to Pride, doing Trans [Day of] Remembrance and making a big thing and having us doing it at the front, that this is something we're doing, we believe in, things like that". Likewise, another chaplain ensures that there is a visible alignment with specific events: "we've just had the trans awareness day on Sunday, so they did Friday and Monday, so I made sure I put trans awareness posters up here and in chapel". Services and commemorations around Trans Day of Remembrance are high on the list of priorities, and several chaplains acknowledge the importance of this being a grassroots event, run by trans people and supported by chaplaincy. During the workshop discussions, one participant raised the need to be mindful about trans-specific events, reminding us that some trans people prefer not to be visible, whilst at the same time wishing to support the relevant political and social changes. There may be further work to be done in 'mainstreaming' events such as Trans Day of Remembrance, both to signal collective allyship and to allow those with a discreet trans history to partake in important gatherings without being visible as trans persons. Additionally, with awareness that the emotional labour might be too costly for the trans community, chaplains might (cautiously) undertake work on behalf of trans people. For example, one chaplain relays their input into the various relevant events as follows:

> In terms of LGBT stuff, I do the trans memorial, if they want an LGBT thing during LGBT history month I'll do that, but I won't put one on, I'll facilitate . . . but if there's something special it really does need engagement of the people who it's about because otherwise it's just daft. Whereas the transgender day of remembrance, I totally get that if you are trans, you really might not want to go to that. And you might. To do it is very important.

Similarly, another interviewee wonders if more proactive engagement by chaplaincy in organising a Trans Day of Remembrance is a purposeful marking of the event, even if not organised by trans people themselves:

> This is something which is good to do, but if you're trans it might just be too difficult to come to. If you're reading out all this list of names. Do you know what I mean? So, I kind of thought, that's OK, if people want to engage, they want to engage.

Diversity Week, Pride and other fixed events in the calendar are valued by most chaplains as central moments of LGBTQ+ visibility demonstrating the welcome they offer (for those with or without a religious faith). One chaplain, for example, holds that Diversity Week is a key period for setting out the stall of the chaplaincy as open and non-judgemental: "In Diversity Week, we'll be very prominent, but a part of Diversity Week, we'll have a rainbow eucharist, and SCM and chaplaincy go to Pride and different things will be going on to sort of put out a message that they are included and invited and welcomed". As a further interviewee elucidates, a conscious decision to signal the chaplaincy's position by organising specific types of events is, despite small beginnings, a constructive means of communicating an inclusive approach:

> The first thing we've actually done, in order to try in a way make it clear we are trying to be more inclusive is that we had an event for LGBT History Month which came from a student saying he wanted to tie together his sense of sexuality and his faith, that he felt the two were often separate worlds. It was a very small event, I think we had about five or six people, including two of the chaplains, the Equality and Diversity person from the university and three members of the LGBT society. But it was, you know, we advertised it and made it clear this is what we were doing and that felt to me like quite an important thing to do.

In many of the interviews with chaplains, significant discussion emerged surrounding the signs and semiotics that chaplaincies can utilise to counter negative meanings that have accrued around symbols. For one chaplain, the message is grounded in continuous visibility:

> There's an importance of visibility, because people won't find you if they can't see you. If you see what I mean. I mean, they might choose not to find you, but if they can see you. So, what I've tried to do is be visible, I'm sure it's really annoying, but every so often I'll send out an all staff, all student email just promoting something I'm doing.

Furthermore, as ordained persons, the wearing of the clerical collar is semiotically charged: an item of clothing that functions as a profound site of meaning-making; yet, with competing signs. For a chaplain, the Christian clerical collar is both a symbol of faith and an indicator of openness and non-judgement: "it's a signifier. If I didn't wear a dog collar I would just look like anybody else . . . I'm announcing my function and if people want to talk to me then they're welcome". That 'function' has nuanced variations; nevertheless, chaplaincy is first and foremost about faith and this brings with it a certain complexity: the chaplain may think the collar operates as an open invitation, but for onlookers, it may elicit association with exclusionary Church discourse. Chaplains are aware of this conundrum:

> As long as I wear my clerical collar I am seen to be in that place. And obviously an answer is to not be, but that isn't the answer for me. I'm sure a Christian chaplain should be noticeably a priest and, but it's complicated because you are representing the Church but then I'm not representing the Church in a sense. I'm not necessarily toeing all party lines.

Hence, the action of juxtaposing the collar against a rainbow lanyard, for instance, encourages disruption of assumptions of judgement and rejection. As one chaplain illuminates:

> One of the most effective things I've been told I've done is to wear a rainbow lanyard . . . I've been stopped in the street in London by gay men usually who want to say to me that 'seeing the rainbow flag and the dog collar together has really affected me and that's healed something in me to see that'.

Consequently, the clerical collar being 'worked' to re-align its symbolism with a more inclusive meaning is a common theme in the interviews. To wear the clerical collar at

certain events is compelling symbolic work: “I’ll sit in the foyer with my dog collar on. And I go on Pride every year. I make a real point of going on Pride wearing my clerical collar”. Moreover, a further chaplain links the visibility of the rainbow with their accessibility as a source of support that aligns with the university ethos:

> Because the university [is] explicitly open about our welcoming of LGBT folk, and I make a very strong point of being very visible, I wear the rainbow lanyard and everything, so I make the point if you come and see me, you can see me that I’m not going to . . . so there is that. Yes, I make that point so people do come up to me . . . and will talk to me. But I did have, I have had some interaction with trans people. Not specifically over faith, but more to do with not fitting in. And not, you know, feeling awkward or practical things like accommodation difficulties. There was one person that I have supported and helped liaise with accommodation to help them get a flat on their own, because they were having problems.

For chaplains then, being visible in particular ways, using signs and symbols to flag up an inclusive attitude may open the door for provision of a whole host of supportive actions for trans people. Thus, there is recognition that more symbolic work needs to be done, as this interviewee denotes:

> I do think I’m a priest for the university, not in some ways and there is something important about symbolically being here representing something. But it does come with baggage. And people make assumptions about what you believe and what you think about them. So, part of what we’re fortunate to have are these spaces where you can just mingle with people and by just creating relationships, you’re showing them that you’re not somebody who comes across judging and perhaps with a hard line.

Moreover, one chaplain considers the impact of ‘sitting on the fence’ on subjects that the Church hierarchy deems to be controversial versus taking a stand as an ally:[32]

> What I found good about [LGBT History Month] was we were focusing on the week, the little litany we did was a litany of lament and thanksgiving. In a way you were focusing beyond the issue and onto the humanity involved, you

[32] For a definition of ally see: https://www.stonewall.org.uk/cy/node/57150

> know. Sort of the way it sort of affected the people involved, but it gave you a way to show you recognised, you know, what had been really difficult for that community and you were marking it, you were respecting it. It wasn't just sort of saying, 'we're going to go on the Pride march and do that' so it's quite difficult I think for people to say that's a bad thing to do. And if you really want to be careful, you could try and make it clear you weren't coming down on either side of the fence. I wouldn't do that. I think it's important to positively say something. But it just gives a way of saying, you know, we recognise there's a community here that's had a tough deal in various ways and we want to mark that. So, I think that's a good thing.

Creativity about ritual, especially for Trans Day of Remembrance, is a recurring theme in the interviews. In keeping with the comments above, a litany, service, vigil or a display represent effective means of building relationships with students and staff who are trans by signalling the chaplaincy's intention to be a provider of support. Profile raising and highlighting a welcoming ethos is also possible via social media,[33] blogging, running events where LGBTQ+ concerns are centred, displaying posters with positive messages, wearing rainbow lanyards and attending LGBTQ+ events. As this chaplain clarifies:

> [We need] all those kinds of signs around. What are your posters up in chaplaincy? What are your fliers? What message are you giving all the time? What does it say on your website? Or your twitter feed or whatever else, about the ethos of your chaplaincy and who it welcomes? And of course, you have to follow through, as a person, and you have to do things like the day of remembrance for victims of transphobia. You know, mark it. Make sure that you mark it, that you do something for that.

Visibility, including using signs and symbols, are cited as the most practical means for resisting negative messages perceived to be circulating in the Church, and, importantly, for actively promoting the chaplaincy as an 'inclusive' space.

[33] We should emphasise that social media is a difficult method of reaching people and often official university or chaplaincy Twitter accounts and Facebook pages do not attract the desired audience in great numbers. A related point is that the Covid-19 pandemic has changed campus life, so that online and distanced methods of communication are being used much more. Chaplains may already be thinking about the long-term impact of this shift on their own work and how they can develop a meaningful online presence.

Student and Staff Bodies

A contentious topic coming to the fore in the interviews is the relationship between chaplaincy and the Christian Union (CU) on campus: interactions range from distant to amicable, mostly with the understanding that the Christian Union represents the (conservative) evangelical discourse around gender and sexuality. Hence, in terms of trans and non-binary people, the majority of chaplains would not expect them to find a comfortable fit within Christian Unions. Matthew Guest et al. (2013) note that Christian Unions tend towards expressions of highly conservative positions, and, increasingly, counter-cultural religion is employed as a marker of their religious identity; this is borne out in the narratives chaplains shared with us. Likewise, the often fraught relationship between chaplaincies and Christian Unions as recounted by Aune et al. (2019) is reflected in our project (although our interviewees are not universally negative on this point). One chaplain states that their CU largely ignores the chaplaincy, but will come for advice on rare occasions. In a similar vein, another chaplain refers to exchange as 'polite but distant'; yet, also recalls an instance of homophobia from a CU member. On the one hand, a single instance of abusive behaviour might not reflect the wider ethos of the CU; on the other hand, it is indicative of potential resistance to the notion of inclusiveness within religious student bodies. Alternatively, a chaplain might attempt to foster positive relations with the CU with a view to bringing about change, as this interviewee proposes: "I'm a bridge builder person, so the bridge with the CU is to try and encourage them, you know, to possibly another way of thinking". Furthermore, even a distant relationship with the CU does not, for some chaplains, preclude the scrutiny of their activities if there are perceived difficulties (although problematic thinking may be difficult to pin down, given the outward standard of compliance with campus policies). One chaplain explains succinctly a form of connection between chaplains and the campus CU that is conducive of scrutiny and intervention, if called for:

> Personally, I won't sign the UCCF agreement because I don't agree with it. Which means I'll never be invited to speak at the CU, but I'm cool with that, that's fine . . . to some extent I'll leave them to operate themselves and also if they overstep the mark and they start doing stuff which is against university policy I would expect the Student Union to pick them up on that. I mean I would talk to the SU, I would work with the SU, if necessary, to try to adjust that, I'd be happy to talk to the CU about where they might have gone wrong and what

> they need to do to redress things. But I wouldn't want to be held responsible for the Christian Union. I want to be in relationship with them, I want to have a good relationship with them, but I don't want to be associated too closely, if you see what I mean. Because we're doing different things. They're a proselytising organisation and chaplaincy should never be that. So, we've got different aims. Different status in the organisation.

Thus, while chaplains may be willing to confront the CU with contraventions of policy, the fact that the aims of the CU and chaplaincy diverge complicates the chaplain's role as arbiter. Many chaplains find the relationship with the CU 'tricky', and, as witnessed in the above quotation, they are not comfortable with the statement of faith that CU speakers are required to sign. Consequently, chaplains are frequently framed as too liberal by CU leaders:

> There are some students who come and talk to me who are kind of loosely associated with the CU and I know that their leaders have said that I preach a false gospel. I think this might be OK. But no, seriously, because, partly because I explain to people what I think the Bible is, and partly because I have services for the Transgender Day of Remembrance and if, you know, yes, I don't care basically.

The framing of the chaplain, by certain student faith groups, as not representing an authentic version of Christianity is the inverse of chaplain's efforts to dismantle the exclusionary messages of the Church hierarchy. Moreover, the lack of concern expressed in the above quotation is shared by the majority of chaplains in our project: they prefer to be labelled 'liberal' and the attached negative discourse from the CU does not bother them. Furthermore, when discussing their positioning on campus between those who do not profess a religious faith and those in the CU, chaplains are aware of being demonised by the latter and considered irrelevant by the former. They take this discourse in their stride and counter the charge through relational work:

> If you're kind of no faith, or have never had much church background, you must look at the chaplaincy and wonder why we're here. And the sort of CU at the other end think that I'm a complete heathen, so I can fall between two stools quite significantly and I think that is the experience of chaplains, quite a lot actually. So, I have to get myself out there and get known, it can become

> quite personal, it can become about you as a person that people have an acceptance.

Conversely, not all chaplains have a difficult relationship with the CU. One chaplain claims that the 'horror stories' circulating amongst chaplains about CUs are not borne out by the one on their campus, which seems to have a different ethos: "I think there is an openness among a lot of CU members that you don't get in other places and there isn't the, there isn't the hostility to ideas that are different from their ideas". Even so, this comment is (dis)qualified by the chaplain's additional assessment of a small minority of conservative Christian students who are incredibly vocal: "they in fact cause us trouble".

An alternative strategy for navigating conflicting beliefs, suggested by one chaplain, is referred to as adopting a 'swim lanes' policy; whereby, Christian groups on campus that amalgamate around exclusionary views do not impose those views on other groups:

> Groups like the CU, I support their right to practice their faith. What I don't support is the imposition of that on other people that they happen not to like. So, I'm developing a bit of a sort of stay in your lane policy, you know. And trying to encourage the Student Union to not be continuing to accept faith groups at Freshers' fair who then spend the whole of Freshers' fair bowling up to the LGBT Society telling them that they are all going to hell. Yes, if you accept that group into Freshers' fair because you want the money, that's what they believe.

A couple of underlying principles are at work in the above analogy of swimming lanes. First, there is a presumption that all versions of faith should be given their own space on campus (it might seem that this is entailed by the right to practise one's religion, but this freedom is now subject to the government's Prevent strategy).[34] Secondly, there is a hint here that the Student Unions ought to shut down (or at least not give a platform to) conservative Christian discourse, because conservative Christians are attempting to intimidate and silence the LGBT Society; the former being at loggerheads with a dialogue that does not fit with a (possibly) politicised approach to inclusivity. Freedom of speech is, undoubtedly, at stake here, but this freedom is not absolute: freedom of speech on

[34] The Government's Prevent strategy creates a duty for Higher Education institutions to address radicalisation. This duty has direct implications for risk-assessing speech in universities in the context of potential terrorism offences. See https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance/prevent-duty-guidance-for-higher-education-institutions-in-england-and-wales

matters of religious faith is only legitimate when it does not infringe upon the freedoms of others, does not cause harm and does not constitute hate speech. At the least, what the chaplain appears to be advocating here is that Student Unions perform due diligence to understand the nature of the Christian Union, their beliefs and the harm they may cause (as opposed to merely granting all student groups stalls at the Freshers' fair).

Trans and non-binary folk are sometimes the site on which these ideological tussles are fought; yet, chaplains may decide to exercise caution in deciding whether and how to intervene. As we have detailed previously, there is a need to challenge vulnerability discourses and to reframe who is seen as presenting 'issues'; trans and non-binary persons are agents, support should be empowering rather than limiting. A Christian trans person may choose to explore belonging in the context of the CU in the full knowledge of the positioning of the group or individuals within the group. (The aforementioned chaplain estimates that most active Christians on their campus gravitate towards the CU and to conservative evangelical churches in the local area; the chaplaincy, therefore, is attractive to students who do not subscribe to this model of belief). In this vein, another chaplain highlights the educational benefits of exposure to the wide variety of contested views and beliefs represented on campuses: "One point of Higher Education and universities is to put people alongside people who disagree with them". Instead of operating so as to protect others, this chaplain understands that effective support equips those at whom prejudice and oppression is aimed to exercise agency; the chaplain evidences this with an account of a student who learned to oppose exclusionary Christian messages without being 'destroyed' by them. This illustration is an active exercise of power within the 'affective economy' (Ahmed, 2004), where discourses impact significantly on subjectivity and emotional well-being. The incisive caveat given by this chaplain, though, is the persistent need to expose the power dynamics within this economy, and to acknowledge that persons in positions of spiritual authority can cause significant harm and are, for some, beyond challenge.

While some of the chaplains interviewed state that the Student Union and affiliated LGBTQ+ groups have good relationships with the chaplaincy, other chaplaincies have minimal contact with student bodies. Engagement across a range of university structures is possible, as this chaplain describes:

> I'm on the student forum which is . . . a group where there's various people and students, quite a lot, you know their reps, so I'm at that. I'm at the Prevent

> strategy group, I go to academic boards, those are the kind of structural things. Student forum is probably the one where the Student Union is most represented . . . I'm line managed by the Vice Chancellor so if I felt there was a problem I would say. I'm loosely attached to the Student Wellbeing Team.

Moreover, the visible presence of chaplains in these bodies is cited by two of the trans students we interviewed as an important factor in chaplaincy support: it presents chaplains with the opportunity to promote the general interests of trans and non-binary people, and also to better understand the culture of the campus environment. As representatives in the structural organisation of a university, chaplains enjoy a privileged position that can be used to tackle institutional or clashing cultural issues on campus; they are often able to go directly to the highest level of university management, as evidenced in the comment above. A chaplain is well-placed to perform a general advocacy role, which can be beneficially harnessed specifically for supporting the needs of trans and non-binary students and staff.

Several chaplains highlighted the ways in which chaplaincy relates to the wider structure of university life. One interviewee, for example, notes: "We are very embedded in student services and they are happy for us to be there . . . We sort of are in the team, but, and I would say we are a valued part of the team, but we slightly come in between the cracks". The in-betweenness of chaplaincy invokes the liminal presence discussed by Aune et al. (2019): working in and with the gap between university culture and Church culture. This adaptability in provision of support is bolstered by recognition of chaplaincy as part of a team, one piece in the jigsaw of support services. The chaplain who shared the above comment also recalls previous chaplaincy arrangements that emphasised their Christian presence and, in consequence, was not as conducive to integration with other university stakeholders. A further chaplain sums this up astutely: "That whole way of being in an institution which has its own rules and cultural way of doing things and you're no longer the person who sets the tone, you know, you're the person who has to decide where to adapt and where not to. It's interesting". Hence, chaplains are negotiating their own process of 'fitting in' and sometimes the representation of Christian faith may not be front and centre in their connections with other parts of the university; although, it is undoubtedly implicit that the chaplain holds a position of authority in religious and spiritual matters.

Chaplaincy as 'Safe Space'

Establishment of the chaplaincy as a 'safe space' is a major theme in the interviews; many chaplains maintain that the physical space can be constructed so as to generate an atmosphere that is supportive and welcoming. In addition, chaplaincy services can be advertised through publicity and an early introduction to new students. Whilst chaplains discuss their obvious pastoral role for those with a Christian faith, the extension of that role to people who profess a different faith or do not have a religious faith is of primary importance, as this chaplain elucidates:

> We try and make sure new students know that this is a space anyone can use, there's free tea and coffee, you can just come in. When they have the tours, they get that. Some people still think you've got to be a person of faith to come. That is not the case and our publicity is very clear that the space is for all students . . . it's certainly not that people of faith are the majority.

Thus, 'safe space' is not built to mirror what might be called 'faith space'; yet, not all chaplains are as upfront about this as others, even when they think they should be:

> I'm not entirely comfortable about this, but I haven't made a big thing about the fact that we are an inclusive area. I try and make it clear to everybody - we have a poster, which I can show you afterwards, which is, we have in all our faith spaces - it's for people of all faiths and none,[35] everybody's welcome. So, the general view is that this is an inclusive space. But we haven't sort of badged that.

These comments indicate that there is scope for more proactive strategies to ensure a clear message is communicated about what the chaplaincy space signifies. Nevertheless, most of the interviewees framed the chaplaincy space as 'safe space', and significant efforts are made to create an environment in which trans people are able to find welcome, confidentiality, a listening ear and emotional and practical support, as this chaplain clarifies:

[35] We note that the use of 'none' is ambiguous: 'none' in the context of faith refers to those who do not align themselves with a named religion. Humanists, for example, do have a faith, but one that is secular rather than religious. We take 'none' here to mean people of all faiths and beliefs. We thank Tina Beardsley for this reminder regarding the inclusion of Humanists.

> There's something about chaplaincy which is about having a sort of safe place to off load. And I'm not a counsellor, but I can just listen, and they can have a rant, or a whatever, or have a cry and you know I don't necessarily have to take any action. And very often I don't take any action, but it's a place to pop in and know that you're, you will be listened to without judgement. Well I hope that is so.

It is noteworthy that this quotation stresses the role of listener rather than counsellor; the chaplain forsakes the temptation to be action and solution oriented. This approach resonates with advice from both Rachel Mann and Christina Beardsley, who assert that attempting to fix and find solutions is not necessarily what a person requires from chaplaincy space. 'Safety' is used to signify a place to be oneself and to share stories confidently, with someone who does not communicate an agenda. Creation of a conducive environment is not always straightforward, and one chaplain suggests that there is a process of internal challenge within chaplaincy to ensure all its representatives strive for inclusivity:

> We kind of know who's safe. And what I wanted to say predominantly is that chaplaincy is safe. And I am now confident of that because of who my colleagues are. I was not in a position to say that two or three years ago. I was not in a position to say chaplaincy is safe. I was in a position to say I'm safe, but not that chaplaincy was safe, because it wasn't.

The acknowledgement that chaplaincy is not always 'safe' is a sensitive issue that this chaplain candidly broached. If there are chaplaincy colleagues who do not wholeheartedly share the definition of 'safe space', this is likely to undermine efforts to tackle systemic and relational biases head on. There are, of course, multiple positions individual chaplains might take, theologically and doctrinally, regarding trans and non-binary identities; however, there is a baseline of what constitutes inclusivity that needs to be openly subscribed to by all chaplaincy staff, if there is to be a consistent and concerted effort to develop and maintain 'safe space' in chaplaincy.

One chaplain highlights a basic understanding of and training in mental health awareness as critical for supporting all students and staff. In addition, there may be specific emotional and mental challenges for people who are transitioning or exploring gender variant identity; this might be a developmental need for chaplains who have not yet accessed

such training. Importantly, another chaplain is candid about the imperative to engage in continuous learning so as to improve their ability to support trans and non-binary students and staff:

> My view is, I would want to be as supportive as I could be for students and for staff, I'm very aware that my understanding is quite limited and there'll be lots of traps I'll fall into because I haven't thought it through. And lots of learning to do really. And I feel in many ways, we're at the stage with the trans community which is a bit like the stage with the gay community some while ago, where a lot of the issues hadn't really been thought about and people are still reacting out of a lack of knowledge and fear. And then there obviously are some more tricky issues about certain areas, so we're catching up a bit is how I feel about that.

In concurrence, a further interviewee voices the significance of admitting uncertainty:

> That's helpful, you know, to actually admit our vulnerability, that we don't know quite how to do this. I think that's okay. Yes. But I feel we're very, we're not very far down the road really. So, we're trying to counteract negative messages, give some positive messages, but we haven't got very far with it yet, is what I feel.

Whilst some chaplains are fairly confident in their knowledge about trans and non-binary matters, others have a learning curve to negotiate. As the last comment suggests, countering negative perceptions about the Church's view on trans and non-binary folk (and the wider LGBTQ+ community) is, for some, still in its early stages. We include, therefore, a recommendation related to training and continual learning about issues affecting trans and non-binary people, as well as keeping abreast of the ways in which worshipping communities are responding (positively and negatively) to the concept of inclusivity in general and to trans and non-binary folk in particular.

Relational Stories within Chaplaincies

Relational work, relayed to us by chaplains, serves to illustrate how some of the principles discussed above have been employed in real-life situations. It is noticeable that trans and non-binary folk bring a wide variety of scenarios to chaplains: from interpersonal matters to finding their voice and challenging negative messages. A consistent thread through the multiple scenarios in which chaplains are called upon to support trans and non-binary people is the building of relationships: chaplains are well placed to undertake

the emotional labour that may not be invested in to the same degree by other avenues of official support on campus. While not all chaplains we interviewed have been invited to assist trans and non-binary folk, some have been approached for support after establishing the inclusive and welcoming environment of the chaplaincy. One chaplain recalls: "There is a trans woman on the staff here and they've talked to me when they first decided that they were going to dress more femalely in their case. Which was nice because they obviously felt I was going to be positive and affirming, as opposed to not being".

This observation shows the potential for affirmation to be sought and gained, beyond the standard academic and administrative routes, in matters that are highly personal, momentous and individual in a trans person's journey, in the context of a trusted relationship. At the same time, it is important not to make assumptions about the nature of the support that is being sought: trans and non-binary folk may be just as likely to seek support with issues that are unrelated to their identity as to seek support with issues regarding identity. Furthermore, as one chaplain reveals, individuals might test the safety of chaplaincy by discussing non-personal matters before disclosing anything personal. It is vital, therefore, that the presenting person is at liberty to define the type of support they require, as this chaplain demonstrates:

> I'm always offering basically the same thing, which is a listening ear, a safe space as far as you know we're ever able to provide that, confidentiality, non-judgement, again as far as you know that's possible for any human. So, my primary thing, when anybody comes to me for support is just to listen and to give them the space to be who they are and say who they are. Sometimes people have come who are clearly, you know, presenting as queer or trans or something and that's very obvious, but actually the issue that they're bringing is something quite different to that. So, it's just really important for me not to assume, oh this must be what is going on with this person, because actually it might just be, this is who they are and they're completely cool with that. And actually, what they want to talk about is, I don't know, plagiarism, or something. You know, and yet it can still take them quite a long time to get to that point of disclosing that's what they're there about. And again, it's this thing about people checking you out. I think particularly people who have been quite damaged by the Church or are quite wary of the Church, they'll come several

> times and for different reasons. They'll come to a free lunch, or to a coffee or something, just to kind of work out, is this a safe person to talk to?

As the quotation above suggests, the act of confidential and non-judgemental listening is likely to be amongst the most significant ways in which chaplains provide support. Once a relationship of trust has been established, then deep explorations can take place, if an individual so wishes.

In a further recount the chaplain explains:

> There was a student who is non-binary, they were really grappling with the whole, for them, very blurred area of non-binary transgender sexuality and really, really grappling with, I don't want to say 'struggling with' because I think they were just inside it, just being themselves. But yes, kind of which, you know, am I any of these labels? Am I all of them? Which one applies to me? . . . it was very fluid for all the time I'd known this person . . . for this person I think they came to the chaplaincy not because there were faith issues, but because chaplaincy was, and is, an accepting place where they felt safe. And I would say about chaplaincy that we are, we do it not in order to make Christians, but because we are Christians and that's the difference. And there was something about our understanding about what Christian hospitality is that made it a safe space for that person.

Hospitality, as an ethos, has been mentioned previously; in these comments it is infused with a faith-based understanding of how to create a welcoming and supportive space. As this chaplain emphasises, the relational work is not based on a need to proselytise. Indeed, several chaplains mention proselytising as something they guard against: attempts at conversion would create an inhospitable environment for many; whereas, chaplaincy is supposed to be a place for all, regardless of faith and beliefs. Admittedly, there may be specific faith issues that trans and non-binary folk wish to talk through, but the aim of relationship-building is to offer support for all situations and concerns. In addition to highlighting hospitality, then, the same chaplain pinpoints a key premise for building relationships; namely, to take the lead from trans and non-binary people when being invited into their story:

> I've learned from [two trans people] and people like them who I've known, but that there are lines between. You can ask a person what pronoun they prefer

> and you can say to them, you know, what do you want me to say if someone else asks me this? Do you want me to refer people to you? You know, that kind of thing. But what you really shouldn't say is 'tell me about your transition, tell me about your story, blah blah blah' because they might not want to. Just let them disclose as they want to.

Alongside this relational work, chaplains are engaging in nuanced thinking around language and space; some are already exploring ways of re-focusing on the forces that generate spaces where not everyone can belong, supporting trans and non-binary folk as they work to be heard and as they challenge systemic barriers and exclusionary discourse.

Interviews with Trans and Non-Binary Staff and Students

We interviewed three trans and/or non-binary students/staff about their experiences of university and whether and how the chaplaincy is part of campus support. One of the major lessons to be learnt from these interviews is that trans and non-binary folk do not necessarily fall into neat categories. For example, binary gender might not always be what the trans person is exploring, nor is there always an affiliation with a trans label. Trans people may choose to switch their used names for various reasons; so, to be alert to an individual's preferences, including an awareness of their 'dead' name usage (if they use it) is crucial to understanding the purpose it serves. Furthermore, some trans people aim to live in 'stealth' (meaning an eschewal of trans identity whilst keeping a trans history private), as one interviewee explains. To carry the trans label is a political as well as a personal act; it is described by the trans non-binary interviewee as both a privilege and a burden, but they emphasise that not all trans people will be public about their identity. This person has a fluid way of presenting, in conjunction with not being 'out' to some groups of friends, which means names and pronouns are changeable depending on the context. Our workshop discussions with participants underlined the need to re-think some practices around pronouns. For example, one trans participant stated that being asked to declare

preferred pronouns in meetings is problematic, since it does not allow fluidity, uncertainty, privacy, or changeability according to context; in other words, in a meeting where pronouns are announced, in that moment a person is required to make a definitive choice and declare it.[36] The variations in how individuals use names, pronouns and descriptions of themselves is part of a developing community culture for trans and non-binary people and for those seeking to offer support; this indicates that there will be a continual need to pay attention to language use and fluidity.

When asked how the university experience impacted upon transitioning, one interviewee disclosed that they used their 'dead' name on their application, and later went through the process of changing names and informing staff of the change. The university procedures were not difficult to navigate, and they had a generally positive experience of the administrative systems. However, campus facilities were problematic: the gym did not have LGBTQ+ sessions; it offered 'men only' and 'women only' sessions, but not being fully 'out' made this binary choice difficult for the interviewee who did not feel comfortable with either of these options. Other activities and facilities (such as toilets) that are arranged to accommodate binary genders also make life difficult for trans and non-binary people.

In terms of the academic side of university life, for one interviewee studies were impacted to some degree by the emotional toll of exploring transition; they had to retake their first year, though they were positive about the support they received, some of which came from the LGBT society based on campus. Nevertheless, a negative experience for this person centred around being questioned in a teaching session about having two names: such public questioning revealed a lack of knowledge and understanding on the part of a member of staff, and, moreover, produced significant distress and inappropriate scrutiny for the student. As the interviewee reflects, circumstances such as this force them to 'out' themselves in uncontrolled and unplanned situations. These micro-outings are a common experience for this person who voices having to 'get used to' the everyday experience of explaining, justifying, or defending details of their identity that do not fit the university

[36] While there are trans folk who find the stating of pronouns helpful, the participants in the workshop also noted that it is frequently cisgendered people who state pronouns on email signatures, social media and so on, as a mark of allyship, without considering the low stakes involved in them doing so compared with the high stakes of doing so as an intersex, non-binary, trans, transitioning, or transitioned person. The increasing assumption that pronouns will be stated on emails or in meetings as a sign of inclusion can be a constant reminder of not fitting in, thereby contributing to exclusion and distress for someone who is either uncertain of their gender identity or has a complex gender history.

system or people's expectations. On the positive side, other interviewees highlighted actions that represent significant progress in terms of cultural change including explicit help that is now offered around gym facilities and toilets, and prominently placed posters around the university affirming trans people; in particular, trans-inclusive symbols in chaplaincy space have made interviewees feel more comfortable on the university campus.

Significantly, the faith journey of one interviewee, a trans person and former student, offers a rich insight into the potential for the university chaplaincy to be a surprising source of support. In this retelling of the overlapping of their faith and transition journey, the interviewee affirms the possibility of finding belonging and space in Christianity via chaplaincy:

> The thing that made me not write Christianity off anymore was that the chaplain at the college was very openly gay and she would preach about being a lesbian and was, is, fiercely intelligent and very funny and deadpan and really sort of owns her faith in a way that radically reorders my understanding of what Christianity actually is and it's not actually for bigots necessarily . . . the trans did come first but because I was going through this total identity breakdown that made me, I think, in some ways more open minded, more up for questioning really fundamental things about myself. Yes, so it's interesting, really intertwined for me. And consequently, because I sort of grew into both my understanding of my gender and my faith at the same time, I do feel a strong sense of ownership over my faith and don't have the same sort of agonies that a lot of trans people who are Christians have, the sense of betrayal and that sort of thing.

This narrative reveals how the chaplaincy can become a proxy for church and provide a faith community that supports transition when mainstream churches might not. Nevertheless, the accessibility of chaplaincy for trans people who have a faith history and a familiarity with Christianity might not be apparent to those without a faith; there are barriers to stepping into unfamiliar territory. An interviewee who does not have a religious faith speaks of wanting to use the quiet space in the chaplaincy, but not "know[ing] what to do" to access the space or the potential support it offered. Chaplains need to examine the practical barriers inherent in stepping over the threshold, especially for those who seek support as a one-off event and are otherwise unversed in chaplaincy space.

Further, the variety of needs that trans and non-binary people might bring to chaplains, as discussed in the interviews, provide an insight into the interweaving of the practical, emotional and spiritual. One interviewee describes the additional burdens carried by trans people as follows:

> [There is] the general anxiety that only trans people have, the depression, substance abuse is really high amongst trans people, having been sexually assaulted is really high amongst trans people. And there is this sort of more, well in my experience, that sort of problem is the more difficult side of it, and it's also the more elusive. Obviously, gender neutral toilets make an enormous difference. [There are] some quite strict dress codes which can be a real source of anxiety, that's a stupid problem to have, but it's still there . . . Things like changing your name with university systems, coming out is quite a stressful procedure, just in terms of all the admin. So, I ended up having an administrator who knew what she was doing and really helped me out. I was lucky in that respect. It was kind of key for me. She emailed all my lecturers and updated all the systems.

Embedded in the above range of potential support requirements (practical, psychological, social, and spiritual), which will be highly individual, there are systemic barriers to belonging. Chaplains, as part of the structural life of the university as well as its cultural life, can exert their influence to smooth administrative and social transition and reduce stress; as part of a support network, chaplains are also well placed to signpost students to mental health and other services.

For one interviewee, who has historic experience of the Church but no longer has a Christian faith, the chaplaincy featured in university life as a significant source of support; a place to be heard in confidence and a place to be treated as a whole person:

> I think the chaplaincy is a place, isn't it, where people can come and talk. I mean I did when I was at uni, to somebody where you know it's going to be confidential. And you hope it's non-judgmental. But it's not always, but the minimum it should be is confidential. And it's not just about support is it, in spiritual matters, it's all the stuff that goes on. Like family estrangement, financial problems because of that, keeping up with your course work when you're dealing with transitioning, or not transitioning, feeling frustrated and

> unhappy about that. You know, perhaps, I don't know. Is there a place for liaison between the chaplaincy and academic staff? Not to spread secrets, but just to kind of, it's just about more awareness isn't it? In fact actually, what happens for a lot of us, is you get [the transition] out of the way and you suddenly realise . . . I've got no money . . . because you've been so fixed on sorting out the gender thing that actually everything else, you suddenly start thinking oh my God I haven't got a pension. Or you know, I haven't done as much work as I would have liked because I've been in hospital, and I've got no family and oh dear I feel a bit . . . you know so the support required is more complex than seeing someone through a transition. And I think the chaplaincy is perhaps the place that could start to move forward a little bit with that.

This reflection underlines how practical considerations run alongside the emotional journey for trans and non-binary people, and, significantly for this project, how the chaplaincy is regarded as a place where thoughts, feelings, concerns can be aired. It is also worth noting the assumption that chaplains liaise with other university staff, since this recurs as a theme in our discussions with chaplains. Further, support required does not end after transition; for this interviewee there were deep feelings of frustration over the time lost and an imperative to catch up in other areas of life.

During this project there have been conversations about visibility and invisibility, vulnerability and resourcefulness. Strikingly, one trans person offers a stark reminder that trans identity coming to public prominence has its downsides:

> Hypervisibility has meant more violence, more media hatred. It's better in a sense that, you know, awareness, but I don't think we're in a situation at the moment where the kind of like excessive attention we're getting is helping . . . it's just helping people think we're a flash in the pan and we didn't exist before 2010.

Whilst this reflection is referring primarily to media coverage, it does highlight the complexities around visibility and the extent to which positive political benefits are met by an increase in harassment and abuse. This same interviewee explains that they made the difficult decision not to publicly own the trans label but to keep their trans history strictly confidential, due to feelings of shame that were experienced from an early age. Consequently, this person lives with a constant fear of exposure, which has an impact

on the types of activities they undertake, shying away from anything too public. Systems of support clearly need to recognise that not all trans people want to be known as trans (although this may not be an option for some).

Outside of the chaplaincy and the university, one interviewee perceives that the institution of the Church of England is far less welcoming of trans and queer folk than of cisgendered and heterosexual people. Yet, this interviewee's experience of the chaplaincy was welcoming and affirming. In addition, this interviewee expressed respect for LGBTQ+ clergy in general, and discussed positive trans role models in the Church, specifically Rachel Mann and Christina Beardsley. Whilst this interviewee is hugely grateful for the activist work done by trans priests within the Church, they recognise that this is sacrificial work, involving the risks associated with high visibility, and a constant 'flag waving' that takes energy away from vocations and careers; although, this is necessary work for trans people who are able and willing to lead. Unsurprisingly, the debate in the Church over the use of liturgy as a ritual of welcome for trans people is an unhappy topic of discussion: "I would rather have just not had the liturgy than seen the very horrible conversation being conducted over our heads basically". For trans people who are aware and active in the Church, this debate is painful and engenders feelings of exclusion.

For our trans interviewee who no longer has a Christian faith, their impression of the Church is based on time spent there as a younger person. They became aware of sexuality being an issue: "[I thought] this is not the place for me. This is not the place. Because people were talking about being anti-gay and I just thought, hmm if they don't like gay people, they certainly won't like me . . . That just being me was probably perceived as a sin". These thoughts are striking, not only because of the sense of subjectivity being violated, but also because they reveal the perceived continuum of rejection across all gender variant identities and sexualities. In short, the messages coming out of the Church are not nuanced; they project a generalised sense of rejection of all LGBTQ+ people. Ultimately, for this interviewee, even though there were further churches to try, their faith journey dissolved:

> [I] had found a church that was OK, I knew that again if they knew about my background they wouldn't want me and it would be scandal. And I've been hurt enough. I don't need to be rejected again. I've been rejected by my family, I don't need to be rejected again thanks. So, I actually stopped and I think I just gradually kind of thought, you know what I don't think any of this is real. Why am I interested in faith?

There is an understanding here that not all churches or Christians hold the same views; however, this person is unwilling (understandably) to be subjected to the discourse of acceptance:

> I hate this word, 'accepted'. Accepted is one step up from tolerated, of course, but it's still insulting isn't it? I don't really want people to see me in a different way, that actually, yeah there's a kind of sense that, and from the Church as well, you're something to be ashamed of, is what I'm trying to say. And that's the message I get from the Church. You still get words like 'tolerance' and 'acceptance', you know. I think 'support' is OK because we all need support sometimes. But there's a sort of, even when people are being positive in the Church, there's such a patronising attitude. And nine times out of ten if someone's got something negative to say about the trans situation, someone's backing it up from the Bible, they think, or the bishop says, you know.

This brings us back to the caution discussed above regarding the effects of discourse and the ways in which language accrues nuanced meaning, both negative and positive. Borrowing from Ahmed's (2004) discussion of the 'affective economy', we suggest that words are part of chains of meanings that have an emotional (and material) impact. As the comments above highlight, 'acceptance' is related to 'tolerance' in a chain of negative meaning that undermines subjectivity and reveals that power is accessed by those doing the 'accepting'. This notion of power is applicable to church communities where gatekeeping occurs at multiple levels, creating boundaries around 'safe' and 'unsafe' spaces, but always spaces that are regulated in ways that create insiders and outsiders. Furthermore, accompanying this perception of an 'acceptance' discourse is the understanding that the Church of England (along with other religious organisations) is not subject to the same legal framework as 'secular' institutions; this leaves our interviewee unnerved. Exemption from equality legislation indicates a structural anomaly that runs parallel to the cultural messages being heard about the Church, even when there are local attempts to welcome trans people. Chaplains need to be aware of the damaging effects of religious exemptions, and they should guard against using language that serves to regulate who belongs in what space.

Whilst the overriding culture at Anglican Foundation universities is substantially different from that of the Church, the university experience is similarly described in ambivalent terms by one interviewee, who highlights the tendency of policies to be constructed and delivered 'top down'[37] (without proper consultation with trans and non-binary people):

> I am sick, sick, sick, of all these policies coming down from all these central university offices where they'd got nobody trans advising them, it's perfectly clear they haven't. They're imagining what we might need, they're imaging what we might be like, what our experience is like, and they've got no idea about real life experience.

Trans people in the Church have been active in trying to ensure that conversations do not take place without trans people present, but successes have been limited and fraught.[38] Likewise, this interviewee would not be willing to partake in tokenism. Ahmed (2018) discusses the problem of tokenism at length: diversity labour is handed to those who are seen as minority and marginalised (as discussed earlier). Additionally, trans folk may have to do enormous amounts of supplementary labour to navigate even simple systems. One interviewee recounts being required, by Human Resources, to hand medical details to an administrative assistant; the request to be able to deliver details directly to the HR manager, rather than adhering to the normal routines, drew attention to the request for privacy. Policies drawn up without the input of trans people do not reflect the lived experience of trans folk, and, hence, might fail to generate a 'safe' campus, as the interviewee points out:

> One of my arguments is that it's all very well saying that you're now safe in the university because you've got these procedures but not everybody is OK about it and actually if you're out in the university, you're then probably going to be out, out there, isn't it? Because it's not closed, is it? So, it's a very, very complicated area.

[37] This tendency to produce 'top down' policies without proper consultation with trans and non-binary people was the initial impetus for this project.

[38] Christina Beardsley felt compelled to leave the Living in Love and Faith project because of a sense of 'powerlessness and oppression'. See https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2019/1-february/comment/opinion/dr-christina-beardsley-why-i-left-the-bishops-sexuality-project

'Safe space' has been discussed throughout this project and we have highlighted competing discourses that have an impact on how voices are heard and whether bodies are 'out of place' (Ahmed, 2000). Policy-making, as the above interviewee suggests, can function as a proxy for culture change, such that well-meaning actions do not have the desired impact:

> I mean, safe space. Again, people have these ideas from the top. What's a good idea? [X] university for example. They've actually set up some separate accommodation for people who fall into the LGBT category if they want to go and be with other gay people and feel they're safe. And I'm thinking that's the very worst thing you can do, because if somebody who is anti-gay or anti-trans finds out, you're all there together. A ghetto. Honestly. Is that awful? With the best of intentions.

These exasperated comments illustrate that a certain (mis)understanding of perceived vulnerability can create further marginalisation for groups of people with non-normative identities who are framed in terms of 'problems' that require solutions.

Despite outward signs of welcome and belonging on campus, therefore, the message from this interviewee is that an intangible sense of being made to feel as if they were 'not a real person' remains when relating to university staff and students. Difficulties in hierarchical relationships in the university have placed them at odds with a power imbalance in which being a trans person is a barrier to accessing power. In this case, a relationship with an insensitive supervisor who knew this person's history was cited as especially gruelling; it left the interviewee feeling that they had been dismissed as an academic.

An additional cautionary note raised in the interviews was the questioning of whether trans people should be included under the LGBTQ+ banner. One person felt that there was antipathy towards trans people that was hidden under the umbrella term. This complication is picked up by research on US campuses, where LGBTQ+ centres can propagate the internal marginalisation of trans people (Marine and Nicolazzo, 2014).[39] Likewise, this theme is explored by Stryker (2017), who offers an historical narrative of the changing status of trans people within gay, lesbian and bi communities. For those who support trans staff and students, therefore, it is important to be aware that, while the

[39] Marine and Nicolazzo's research looks at language and naming, whereby the order of LGBTQ+ is often seen as hierarchical.

LGBTQ+ abbreviation can function as a helpful political umbrella expression, LGBTQ+ groups are not always obstacle-free for trans people. As we noted above, this issue also arose in statements gathered by our survey (and is a potential area for further study).

Narratives of lived experience provide an informed foundation on which to build chaplaincy practices with the potential to assist trans and non-binary people. Of the people interviewed, one trans person had rejected the Christian faith and one had a strengthening faith intertwined with a transition journey. Research shows that there are variations in the extent to which a journey of transition either solidifies Christian faith or leads a person to reject religious faith owing to feelings of non-belonging (Yarhouse and Carrs, 2012). Thus, key messages revolve around chaplaincies being an active part of the structure of the university, liaising with staff, contributing to policy as well as individual well-being discussions, and, above all, listening to trans and non-binary folk. Chaplaincies can provide significant succour: a space to be heard in confidence and without judgement, where practical, emotional and spiritual concerns can be aired. Yet, chaplains and others assisting trans and non-binary folk should examine the discourses employed that reduce agency and that do not focus on the sources of bias or oppression. Those offering support also need to understand that trans journeys are highly individual and systems and approaches need to reflect this.

Interviews with Rachel Mann and Christina Beardsley

Rachel Mann and Christina Beardsley, both priests in the Church of England who write and speak about their trans identity, have provided our project with rich detail drawn from their personal experiences, combined with their thoughts on theology, doctrine, and the debates around the status of trans and non-binary people within the Church. Whilst both interviewees unlock a number of significant theological discussions, for the purposes of this report we focus on the themes that enlighten the support of trans and non-binary people on university campuses. These themes include: the Church of England's fractured positioning on issues of gender and sexuality, the wider social experiences of trans and non-binary folk, thoughts on how university chaplains can best guide trans and non-binary staff and students who choose to engage with the chaplaincy.

The Culture of the Church of England and the Lived Experience of Trans Priests

The Church of England is mired in internal debates concerning the theological and doctrinal status of trans people and those identifying with sexualities that do not conform to the ideological norm of heterosexual marriage; these can be overlapping identities as we have noted above. Both Rachel and Christina (Tina) reveal a complexity of positions within the Church surrounding the meaning of 'gender' and its relationship to sexuality;

thus, the affirmation of trans people and diverse sexualities rest on separate but related debates. Whilst sharing her story of exploring sexuality and her gender identity as a priest, Christina explains that she 'came out' as gay before understanding that her gender identity was not male. Following her transition, she and her male partner were married in church, as a heterosexual couple. During her journey, Christina was required to negotiate doctrinal issues that foreground sexuality; nevertheless, her trans identity has also been problematised by the Church. Consequently, she has negotiated several intersections of belonging; she describes her lived experience as involving multiple exclusions as a priest in the Church of England: "I've also had to cope with homophobia, transphobia and gynophobia . . . but the trans thing was like a whole step up really, because there are no role models". Christina's journey through multiple positionings is instructive for grasping the essence of the institutional Church's difficulties in responding positively to identities that fall outside of the regulated framework of heterosexuality and fixed binary notions of sex and gender. From the perspective of the structural liminality of women priests (cis and trans), it is evident that the Church of England privileges cis men.

Similarly, Rachel plots the tortuous journey the Church has travelled; she highlights the momentous milestone of officially recognising that there are no theological principles preventing trans people becoming priests:

> To be ordained in the Church of England is, in one sense it should be no big thing, but in another sense you're being entrusted with potentially the cure of souls and to say actually trans people are worthy of respect and equal treatment with everyone else. That was a watershed.

Yet, the Church's welcome of trans identities is fractured by the decision-making process surrounding the introduction of a liturgy of welcome. In 2017, the General Synod voted in favour of introducing a liturgy of welcome for trans people, and, in Rachel's words, the support for the motion was 'overwhelming'. Liturgical ritual is vital for resolving liminality for people who are seeking to belong, to be visible and to be affirmed (see Turner, 1969/2017; Bell, 1992).[40] However, the House of Bishops responded by arguing

[40] To underscore why liturgical developments are important, we point to Clifford Geertz's 'moods and motivations' in rituals. That is, rituals model what is played out in social reality (and vice versa). If social change cannot be incorporated into rituals, then ethos and worldviews remain static (Bell, 1992). It is also useful to consider Victor Turner's suggestion that ritualistic words make things happen (Turner, 1969/2017). It is not insignificant that the progress-pushback cycle in the Church of England has revolved around liturgical guidance.

that existing liturgy - the renewal of baptismal vows – would suffice. Rachel is not alone in considering this to be an inadequate response, and one that did not reflect the spirit of the agreed motion. Nevertheless, guidance on the use of baptismal vows for 'welcoming transgender people' was produced in consultation with Rachel, Christina and others; the guidance was agreed by the House of Bishops and published in 2018,[41] only to be swiftly met with a backlash. As Rachel recalls: "Suddenly the evangelicals and conservatives are just losing it. Completely losing it, saying 'the House of Bishops have behaved completely inappropriately and have asked us to accept too much now'". Both Rachel and Christina refer to the evangelical conservative response as a 'pushback' of significant proportions.

Surprisingly unswayed by protesting voices from the conservative evangelical wing and some Anglo-Catholics in the Church, at a 2019 meeting of the General Synod during which numerous questions concerning the affirmation of trans people were asked, the House of Bishops stood by the earlier guidance based on baptismal faith. Rachel believes this narrative is of importance for chaplains in understanding the subtleties of Church positioning:

> I believe that guidance is in some respects a watershed because it's a powerful signal to the wider world about the status of trans people in Church. But theologically it doesn't actually add up to a hill of beans, because Anglicanism has a key concept at the heart of its doctrine . . . 'as we pray so we believe'. . . It basically says that the way of praying reveals what we believe, what our doctrine is. So, thinking in terms of this trans guidance, the House of Bishops can put their hand on their hearts and say, 'we've not changed doctrine because we've not changed liturgy'.

In other words, at the same time as signalling a trans-inclusive environment in the Church, the protest – the 'pushback' – tells of an anxiousness to protect a fixed notion of binary gender.[42] Rachel believes that this anxiety stems, in part, from the complementarian[43]

[41] See https://www.churchofengland.org/news-and-media/news-and-statements/guidance-welcoming-transgender-people-published

[42] Disputes over sex and sexuality displace social anxiety (Rubin, 2011); that is, power is being destabilised when heteronormative and binary genders are troubled.

[43] Complementarity is a theological view that men and women have different characteristics that inform the sex/gender roles that they fulfil. These traits are considered part of a natural order. Identities and practices that fall outside heterosexuality and fixed gender and gender roles are considered outside this natural order.

position of the Church, and, further, from the sacramental status of heterosexual marriage within the Anglo-Catholic wing of the Church. The fallout from this debate is of profound significance for Christina; she summarises the fragmented affirmation as follows: "we offer this unconditional welcome but you're not having a liturgy [laughs]". These mixed messages for trans and non-binary people, and for others who do not identify as heterosexual, are a substantial barrier to actual belonging and to *feelings* of belonging. Moreover, it is highly likely that this ambivalence is not perceived, by wider society, as a Church of England intellectual debate, but, rather, as signalling the probability of the rejection of gender variance and sexual diversity within all Christian communities.

Equivocation in the Church uncovers mutually exclusive beliefs. For instance, the Church's willingness to marry trans people in church, where heterosexuality is the basis of the relationship, holds an inherent contradiction: the implication is that transitioning gender is ontologically possible because it can 'create' heterosexuality; whereas, if 'being trans' is not a possible status, then same-sex marriage is the ontological result. As Rachel elucidates: "You can't have both. Either you accept trans people . . . or you say trans people are impossible. Then . . . we've allowed same-sex marriage in Church . . . This is why gender blows up sexuality for me". Thus, deep thinking about these inherent contradictions in fixed positions is imperative for chaplains to explore as they guide trans and non-binary Christians, so as to equip themselves with coherent theology that encompasses gender variance and sexual diversity.

Christina now senses a deterioration in the atmosphere in the Church following the furore over liturgical guidance. Consequently, she is less optimistic about the Church's position on trans people in general than she was at the early stages of the debate: "we lived in days which were sort of progressive, more progressive. And we expected it to become even more progressive. But it's all been a struggle, to get women ordained, and now we're on the next struggle to get full acceptance of LGBTI+ people". This sense of regression in the Church's positioning has impacted on Christina's ability to continue to be part of official conversations. Shortly before our interview, Christina withdrew from the Living in Love and Faith project citing an imbalance in the representation within the working group, a sense of marginalisation and powerlessness, and the 'demonisation' of an LGBTQ+ person (Beardsley, 2019).[44] In her words, the guidance being developed around liturgical

[44] See https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/living-love-and-faith

provision is a 'red line' for the Church, especially for the evangelical wing. Christina's opinion, informed by empirical research she has undertaken, is that the debate 'does harm to people'. Reminiscent of the (continuing) debate on the position of women in the priesthood, there is an expectation that each 'side' is open, generous, and accommodating of opposing views. Yet, as Christina points out, the conflicting positions are 'not equal'; the Church adopts a model of intellectual debate that ignores the power of hegemony. Furthermore, it disregards the extensive harms caused when the dominant position obstructs the self-actualisation of those whose identity falls outside Church-defined norms. As Christina reports: "the whole thing is stacked against it"; the power lies with those supporting the status quo. Remarkably, Christina retains positivity on the grounds that individual churches are more receptive:

> Like with the Sibyls[45] which started in 1997 and was a refuge for people, trans people who had been rejected by their churches. And they couldn't have communion so at every meeting there'd be communion. We've seen a big change really. People are accepted in their churches, yes.

Christina highlights the importance of welcoming churches and chaplaincies publicly signaling their inclusiveness - on websites, for example - to enable trans and non-binary folk to be sure of finding an inclusive ethos within a worshipping community. Equally, within churches there should be an awareness of gendered activities that leave trans and non-binary people out of step (such as splitting singing voices into male and female).[46] Chaplaincies should also examine whether they arrange gendered activities that take for granted a male/female binary.

Beneficially for our project, Christina also brings knowledge of chaplaincy work and the opportunities it affords for developing a pastoral theology. She moved into hospital chaplaincy at a time when Church structures were unable to cope with her transition. Despite the greater liberty of expression attested to by most of our interviewed chaplains, Christina still had to battle against an initially negative response from the Church, which jeopardised her licence; this was followed by irresolute backing from the hierarchy.

[45] The Sibyls is a faith-based group that supports trans people who are Christians and detail of their work can be found in Beardsley and O'Brien (2016).

[46] We have already mentioned anxieties around voice representation and during this project we facilitated voice coaching for local trans people.

Inevitably, then, her priesthood and her activism are interconnected; she avers: “titles, name, Church of England priest, LGBTQ activist. No, I don’t separate it, I don’t think you should separate it”. In addition, she summons ordained people in the Church whose gender and/or sexuality troubles heteronormative and binary models to speak out more readily, to add weight to the voices that challenge the official positioning of the Church (see Beardsley and O’Brien, 2016).

Christina recounts an invitation to participate in an event based on Mary Beard’s 2017 book, *Women and Power,* as part of London Fashion Week, which signalled cultural belonging, even while a compromised experience of belonging persists in the Church. Ahmed’s concept of ‘body out of place’ (Ahmed, 2000) proffers a lens through which to understand this disjunction: bodies out of place are made so through discourse that creates boundaries for belonging. As Christina puts it: “I think I’m more understood, accepted, just included as a powerful female voice here in the fashion world . . . it’s very much governed by values of equality and diversity [more] than the Church”. Thus, the intellectual and theological debates about sexuality and gender variance that continue in the Church, and the ambiguity these debates generate, serve, Christina believes, to other and to marginalise those who do not conform to the Church’s binary and heterosexual constructions. In other words, the debate itself is a process of alienation: “The Church has left me”, Christina opines. Similarly, Rachel contends that the backlash within the Church has spotlighted her: “I’ve been accused by GAFCON [Global Anglican Future Conference], who represent quite a large part of the wider Anglican Communion, [of being] one of the top ten reasons why the Church of England’s going to hell in a handcart, at one point”. Such a personalised focus on high profile trans priests indicates that Church discussions are not restricted to abstract principles; instead, they coalesce around trans people who are willing to speak out (as noted previously, trans people and their bodies are sites on which debates about gender take place (Stryker and Whittle, 2006)). Hence, Church disputes have left Rachel, and other high profile trans people within the Church, carrying the burden of ‘hurtful things’ voiced publicly by others, whilst at the same time feeling that their own voices are muzzled. Although it might seem that having a seat at the table is an invitation to be heard, it can compromise the ability to speak up. As Rachel clarifies, her involvement in producing guidance renders her culpable for it and positions her on the side of the Church hierarchy, such that she does not feel able to stand against the backlash; she, and others, have been made to embody the process. Nevertheless,

disagreement over the liturgical welcome for trans people has, in Rachel's view, fashioned some intriguing middle ground within the Church: "In my more academic moments, I'd call it interstitial or liminal, or queer space actually, which queers the liturgy, but doesn't in one sense change". That is, while the liturgy at the heart of the altercation has not been altered, the widening of its application, by crafting additional guidance, changes the meaning-making process. Somewhat predictably, therefore (given the Church's track record), the guidance on welcoming trans folk has become the focus of opprobrium. Ironically, the foregrounding of the expertise and lived experience of trans priests, such as Rachel and Christina, in the process has resulted in those same trans priests becoming responsible for defending inadequacies in the guidance, which, as Rachel points out, has had a silencing effect.

For trans and non-binary folk to belong in Church is a precarious experience; in spite of the visibility of active trans priests, like Christina and Rachel, their subjection to personalised and hurtful attacks generates an impression that joining a worshipping community as a trans or non-binary person is a risky enterprise. For those who do join, there are, Christina propounds, ubiquitous uncertainties: "is it OK for me to read? . . . there are non-binary and trans people, [who] if they come out in a conservative church, will be told to step down from a public role, even if it's being in the music group or something". Fortunately, the majority of chaplains interviewed for our project recognise the unpredictability of belonging in certain types of churches and their need to be well informed of the local landscape before signposting. However, Christina's assessment of the situation also underscores the role that chaplaincy can play in providing opportunities for trans and non-binary folk to develop leadership skills, especially where these opportunities seem patchy in local churches. Indeed, one of our interviewees who identifies as trans reflects positively on the great deal of experience they gained in leading services, for example, within the chaplaincy, rather than at a local church.

Additionally, the need for a more nuanced comprehension of the difference between non-binary and binary identities within the trans community is crucial. Christina describes herself as binary, but she predicts that the 'future is non-binary'. Increasing numbers of young people are rejecting the notion of gender altogether in what can appear to be rapid social change; with magnanimity Christina states: "it must be really hard for the bishops, those who are of my generation, to even get their heads round that". Rachel too confesses to having to learn about non-binary identities; she sees this new exploration

as a vital step in the expansion of meanings around sex and gender.[47] Not only is the Church's position with regards to both sexuality and gender highly complex, it is influenced, Rachel attests, by the even more complex use of language in wider society. Discourses are nuanced; yet, as Christina's life story testifies, in the eyes of the Church there are "good trans people and not so good"; she declares, "we can't have that". As we have noted above, trans people who are deemed to be heterosexual after transition (although they might not identify as such) are more likely to receive a welcome in the Church of England than trans people whose sexuality falls outside of the heteronormative narratives of the Church (Althaus-Reid's (2000) concept of indecent theology explores this in more detail). Likewise, Rachel observes that the performance of heterosexuality, supported by a gender binary, satisfies some of the doctrinal demands made by the Church. This performativity unhelpfully throws the onus back onto the trans person to fit the theological parameters that act as boundaries (or closed doors and walls (Ahmed, 2018; 2019)), creating the decent/indecent, or good/bad trans person. Thus, chaplains need to consider whether trans and non-binary Christians receive an unconditional welcome in churches or whether that welcome is conditional upon a particular 'reading' of their sexuality.

In contrast to the institutional (and individual) rejections experienced by trans people within the Church, Christina accentuates the mutual sustenance prevalent in trans groups: "we try and care for each other. My experience is that you can, voices are respected and it's often an education for other groups . . . you have numerical strength, you have the synergy and you have the education". On the one hand, the low numbers of trans and non-binary folk accessing chaplaincy services reduces the likelihood of strength in numbers; on the other hand, chaplaincies can engender a sense of community and 'numerical strength' via the provision of care within a group and an education that can spill outwards.

The Wider Cultural Challenges and Support for Trans Persons

Christina notes the progress made in terms of understanding and assistance for trans and non-binary people in wider society: the establishment of Trans Day of Remembrance (TDoR) is a significant indicator of the space that has been claimed for expression of grief, as well as making a quiet political statement (see Stryker, 2017 for the history TDoR). However, even this well-established event is not synonymous with an easier life for trans people, as Christina's account reveals:

[47] Rachel was born in 1970 and Christina has been in the ministry for 40 years, and they both describe generational differences with young people today who are trans and non-binary.

> The university were having, the trans group were commemorating the trans memorial, and I attended chaplaincy, and they were in floods of tears . . . the young man, the convenor of the group had committed suicide, so that's what the anguish was about. Why would that happen? Because this is a very different world to when I was young. It's much more affirming really.

Whilst there has been, in Christina's view, a great deal of social progress, there remain concerns that require significant attention. Rachel's reflection on the 'backlash' to the Church's guidance on the use of baptismal liturgy for trans people leads her to the conclusion that this is part of a much wider set of issues, some of which come from particular groups of feminists: "it's made, at times, my life really quite uncomfortable". Rachel sees the Church's equivocal positioning and the exclusionary discourse of some feminists as a coalition of regressive forces; her negative experiences are not, therefore, confined to the Church's disputes and ambivalent positioning on trans and non-binary identities. Invited to speak at a conference on transgender and Christian feminism, she encountered a more hostile element within the question session than she had experienced in previous years of public speaking. Similarly, owing to her high media profile, Rachel became a talking point on Mumsnet in a thread which she found painful, undermining and difficult to read. There are times, explains Rachel, when she feels a sense of inadequacy in the company of cis women and in the company of feminists, forcing her to question whether she exists in the midst of a social reality that she does not always perceive. She elaborates:

> It just shows how there are things afoot and I have to say it's rocked me, actually . . . Everything that's happened in the last six months around the Church of England and the pushback. It has been hard at times. I've received, along with Tina, some really horrible things said about me.

Consequently, Rachel's sense of belonging has shifted and become unstable; her existence at the forefront of campaigning within the Church has attracted hostility from various quarters, not just evangelical conservative Christians. A noteworthy element of Rachel's story, then, is that increased visibility for trans people can become skewed and used to induce moral panic in the media: "it's as if trans people are taking over the world and that we're everywhere, and it's that other thing, we've become really dangerous and really powerful". Trans people seek to be heard in an authentic way, but this spotlighting is juxtaposed against the discourse of unsettling power. While the avoidance of a

vulnerability discourse means that guidance is less about protection and more about empowerment and social change, for those trans people who openly challenge the status quo and who work hard to have their voice heard, the emotional cost may be insurmountable. Rachel speculates about how difficult contemporary life might be for trans folk at an early stage on their journey who come up against the types of hostilities she has encountered; the impact may be highly damaging to faith and self-confidence.

Signs, Symbols and Language

Rachel's insights into the queering of space, making liminality productive, suggest the potential for reframing chaplaincy in a new way. In the wider social world, she believes trans people do have some room to "come to terms with who they are and hopefully it's as safe a space as possible". The university space may provide the opportunity to live congruently at the same time as unravelling issues around faith; a campus chaplain may well be the first figure of authority to whom a student or member of staff discloses feelings about trans or non-binary identity. Rachel describes this space, the relative rarity of the event and the risks entailed in exploring new concepts, in sacred terms. Her hope is that chaplains will be as prepared as possible for this moment: "it's holy ground, isn't it? Of wonder, terror, potential delight, rejoicing and all of those things wrapped up in such a way, you know, it's Moses' burning bush stuff. It's take off your shoes time". The onus, then, is on chaplains to ensure readiness for these occasions of disclosure, which requires knowledge and understanding about what it means to be a trans person, including the language and concepts involved, alongside an awareness of institutional matters within the university and faith-based issues that might arise. Much preparation can be done, then, to create the space that can be 'holy ground' for trans and non-binary people who choose to engage with chaplaincies in this way.

Rachel is equally keen to challenge the meanings that are defined by the Church and attached to its symbolic life; this, she states, requires an archaeology of Church discourse to investigate whether such meanings have always been fixed. Additionally, she advocates actively 'playing with' symbols and their meanings from a queer and a feminist perspective: "let's see what those key notions contain within them. I think that's been crucial for my understanding of the spaciousness that's available in Christianity for trans people". For this spaciousness to be utilised by chaplains to counter the narrowness of official messages from the Church, they will need a working knowledge of trans-inclusive and non-binary theologies.

Chaplaincies as a Place of Support

As noted above, Christina has experience of chaplaincy work, especially its theologically practical and pastoral elements. Her view is that university is the 'ideal' place to explore trans identity; however, she observes that this exploration also attracts micro-aggressions and negative occurrences that are detrimental to good mental health: "It's not because they are trans and non-binary, it's because of all the society and theological pressures . . . They might have low self-esteem, or they may need support in one way or another . . . So, knowing that they could be vulnerable" is vital.

For both Rachel and Christina, whilst ministry can revolve around a deep pastoral commitment, there is a caution against needing to provide answers. As Rachel points out, "in one sense there's a kind of instinct to save" someone who is struggling to find coherence of identity and faith. The temptation to rush to solutions, to enable congruence is strong:

> You . . . turn it into a counselling encounter actually. Let's fix you quickly. I'm not saying that that is necessarily inappropriate. A chaplain is there to love all those who come and to allow people to discern, find out who God is calling them to be. But I want to sort of say, to find space to build relationship, to hear story, over a period of time, is probably the way to help someone come to a kind of integration of their story.

Several of our interviewed chaplains recognised this 'counselling' approach as one to avoid; they aim to focus on listening without judgement (although in the workshop discussions, a trans person emphasised that practical help is also extremely valuable). Moreover, Rachel astutely discerns a lack of harmony in the faith lives of Christians more generally. Contrary to the officially inclusive requirements in secular institutional life that render overt discrimination and bias illegitimate, in the Church there are strands of teaching that remain explicitly exclusionary resulting in "people living these divided selves". Incongruency is not, therefore, an effect of being trans or non-binary in itself; incompatibilities are generated by external constructions of the meanings of Christian symbols. It is the presumed fixed-ness of these meanings that creates incongruency for anyone who finds themselves having to alter positioning (even unconsciously) between their secular and their Church lives. Rachel's answer to this conundrum is to model 'space' that enables people to express themselves outside of any kind of orthodoxy; in her

ministry she invites people to be congruent by asking 'tell me about the God you actually believe in'. Religion, she detects, involves fitting ourselves into a specific shape that has been constructed through theological and doctrinal discourse, and previous experience of the Church. To construct an environment where individuals are not being compelled to 'fit' necessitates troubling the power that is exercised over insider/outsider markers. An essential element of the troubling is listening to the stories trans people want to tell. Rachel believes chaplains are ideally placed for this resistance to the requirement to fit religious 'boxes'; since, as we have highlighted, chaplaincies themselves are frequently liminal, in-between spaces, and chaplains are likely to subscribe to a liberal theological approach. The lesson here, then, is to pay attention to the different ways in which stories are told, amplified, kept secret or shared; this emphasis on listening resonates with other parts of this research project and challenges the discomfort we have noticed when trans and non-binary voices are made public.

Rachel offers a profound, yet practical, approach for Christian nurture when there are tensions, both perceived and actual, between Church doctrine and personal identity. She suggests thinking through the approach to the Bible:

> I am passionate about encouraging people to think about the resources they use to read the Bible. I mean, technically they're hermeneutic . . . the kind of interpretive frameworks that they bring and invite people to ask, 'what is the Bible?' . . . How are we reading it and how are we letting it read us? I think there are some positive resources to be found in the Bible.

The specifics of what a trans-inclusive reading of the Bible might look like can be found in texts in the recommended reading at the end of this report. Rachel's point is that, if people come to a chaplain struggling to make sense of 'clobber texts' referring to sexuality and gender, chaplains are well placed to discuss different hermeneutical lenses that may help the reader to see faith and identity in more harmonious terms.

Christina, similarly, underscores the importance of listening to what people say about themselves and the need to avoid making assumptions:

> Taking time to listen to people I think is really important and of course chaplaincy is very important in listening to people about where they are. I'll give you a story about this. My Roman Catholic colleague, radical Roman Catholic Religious, he got very upset because there was a patient who was clearly

> transitioned, was female, female name, but the gender marker in the data, the hospital database was male and he got so cross and I said 'why don't you go and say something to the nurse in charge?' so he did. And nurse went and spoke to this woman who was South American and she said, 'oh no, no, I'm trans it's superior to male and female'. So, she was quite happy. But I felt it a bit and he certainly did. This is not right. But no, it was good he checked it out and she was OK with it.

This narrative serves as a reminder that listening is a part of Althaus-Reid's see-discern-act model (Althaus-Reid, 2000); a model that chaplaincies can use to gain general understanding, and also to ensure a constant vigilance that avoids undermining a trans person's agency by inadvertently making assumptions regarding the meaning of advocacy.

Thus, our discussions with Rachel and Christina bring into focus the multiple ways that the Church of England presents ambiguous and contradictory messages about gender and sexuality that negatively affect trans and non-binary folk with Christian faith. The backlash within the Church against proposals for guidance when using baptismal vows as a liturgical welcome for trans people has been significant, revealing the 'turf wars' taking place at all levels of the institution. Chaplaincies are well placed to provide a haven from the religious wrangling, simultaneously giving room and time to explore trans-inclusive and non-binary theology. For the individual trans and non-binary person, disclosing possibly for the first time their journey is a 'holy ground' moment that requires preparation, knowledge, understanding and a non-counselling approach.[48] Gender and sexuality exploration is not something to be 'fixed' and should not be framed as an 'issue' which the individual presents (or represents); instead, chaplaincies can be a valuable source of support for the emotional, social and spiritual work a trans person may need to undertake as part of their journey.

[48] Our intention here is to emphasise the avoiding of a 'fixing' approach, but not to dismiss therapeutic counselling undertaken by professionals; a resource that participants in this research indicate can be an important part of their journey.

Recommendations

At the heart of this project is the aim to hear the voices, and learn from the experiences of, trans and non-binary people, so as to raise awareness and increase visibility of their narratives. Some of the recommendations below reflect practical responses to themes raised that chaplains could integrate into their everyday work. We have also discussed the need to explore fundamental shifts in the way that supporting trans and non-binary folk is framed. We have noted that it can be problematic to conflate identities under the umbrella LGBTQ+ which is used as a shorthand in inclusivity discourse. Research has shown that this homogenisation causes difficulties for trans and non-binary folk in being heard clearly (Stryker, 2017); it may obscure the distinct support needs of different groups of people. In terms of Church doctrine, gender variation is not understood in the same way as sexuality; yet, there is a persistent opacity of doctrinal and theological positioning about trans and non-binary identities leading to ambivalent messages circulating around a generalised LGBTQ+ label. One of the interviewees who is trans highlighted how this conflation of identities can render trans and non-binary folk invisible and chaplains (as well as LGBTQ+ groups on campus) should explore whether and how this can be remedied.

Relatedly, there is a need to examine the discourses that are woven into polices that are intended to ensure the status and rights of trans and non-binary folk, but may serve to maintain marginalisation and/or may stand as a symbol of progress without bringing about actual change. We have briefly discussed how language is part of an economy of affect (Ahmed, 2004); words such as 'accepted' do not necessarily foster belonging or genuine parity between identities, but rather sustain the dominant constructions of gender and sexuality and continue the othering of those who fall outside of these constructions. Even words such as 'welcome' can accrue insider/outsider meanings (see Ahmed, 2018; 2019); thus, we acknowledge the need to engage in the difficult task of deconstructing the language framework and revealing who has power in the process of meaning-making. We have highlighted that 'genderism' - the privileging of hegemonic heterosexual binary cisgender - can permeate policies and activities; hence, chaplains can play a significant role in challenging genderism, especially as they work with the Christian symbol system as well as with secular/cultural tropes and language.

Research on vulnerability discourses in policy-writing (Dirks, 2016) is a useful troubling of well-intentioned protective approaches without undermining the value of provision of help when trans and non-binary folk seek support. As our experience of trying to facilitate the sharing of trans and non-binary people's stories shows, protection discourses can unintentionally stifle trans and non-binary voices and visibility, in a process that is often controlled by those in authority who seek to act as protective guardians of people and spaces. On the contrary, several examples were given by chaplains of trans and non-binary students challenging their marginality (by attending Christian Union, for example) and gaining the tools to resist negative messages from the pulpit; these illustrate Dirk's (2016) 'resourcefulness' discourse. An exploration of vulnerability and resourcefulness discourses serves to remind us that the focus should not fall on the individual who presents as or with a 'problem', but rather on the forces that construct marginality for some. Trans and non-binary people may seek guidance from those in positions of authority to help negotiate systemic barriers and work through social and emotional considerations; any assistance offered should aim at empowerment and promote agency. Equally, therefore, support networks, including chaplains, need to consistently challenge the process of othering that determines whether space is 'safe' or 'unsafe'. To shift the focus onto systemic and institutional responses is a particular conundrum for chaplains, as they represent a Church that is clearly struggling to deconstruct fixed ideas about gender and sexuality, and they also work within the university institution whose policies are outwardly inclusive, but may still be failing to reverse the marginalisation of trans and non-binary people.

Our foregrounding of the lived experience of trans and non-binary folk has provided a strong context in which to position the discussions with chaplains, who, in the interviews, revealed a range of positive activities already being developed, ideas to be shared and considered, and learning that is still required. These discussions are reflected in the interconnected recommendations, which collectively form an holistic strategy of listening, learning, developing and influencing; the recommendations are not, therefore, designed to be considered in isolation from one another. Further, the recommendations have been constructed with practicability in mind, so that chaplains can act on them with immediacy, and can measure levels of effectiveness by assessing direct impact (such as increased visibility and interaction on campus, and a growing base of knowledge and theological resources, and so on).

Listening To and Working with Trans and Non-Binary People

The act of listening and 'seeing' is emphasised by Althaus-Reid as part of a trans-inclusive practical theology (Althaus-Reid and Isherwood, 2009). Comparatively, one interviewee who identifies as trans highlights the ways in which they are 'seen' and acknowledged; the visual cues of posters, for example, gave this trans person a sense that the campus existed as a place in which their subjectivity could be fully explored and expressed. Our first recommendation reflects the need to listen to and see trans and non-binary people in ways that can be built into the everyday work of chaplains. Further, the research of Aune et al. (2019) includes analysis of whether and how chaplains measure their impact on students; they suggest building in feedback loops to ensure chaplaincy policies and activities are providing support that matches need. For the purposes of this project, we re-focus their recommendation and propose an iterative process of consultation by the chaplaincy to ensure regular feedback is gained from trans and non-binary folk. We also stress the fundamental principle, reinforced by interviews with Christina Beardsley and Rachel Mann, that deliberation, debate, and conversation should take place *with* trans and non-binary people and not in their absence. If trans and non-binary folk are not directing discussions, then even where there are good intentions, hegemonic power and control over insider/outsider status is reproduced.

Whilst there are some circumstances where chaplains may decide it is appropriate to act on behalf of the trans community (such as the Trans Day of Remembrance), this should still be informed by trans and non-binary people themselves. There are likely to be trans and non-binary folk on campus who have chosen not to engage with the chaplaincy (or are unaware of what chaplaincy is) and chaplains may need to actively seek opportunities to consult with trans and non-binary students and staff to learn about their experiences on campus and to identify the ways in which chaplains can drive cultural change.

Recommendation 1: To Listen and To Share

University chaplains should undertake regular exercises, formal and informal, to listen to, consult with, and gain feedback from trans and non-binary staff and students about chaplaincy experiences and activities and more general experiences on campus. Listening and consulting work may be planned by other groups on campus, and chaplains should investigate how they can be involved in a wider landscape of listening and 'seeing' (without interrogating or prying). Following Rachel Mann's comments about sharing stories, and

supporting the 'resourcefulness' discourse (Dirks, 2016), we recommend that chaplains explore the space, time, and opportunity they can offer to hear and, where appropriate, facilitate the amplification of trans and non-binary people's stories. Whilst some of this listening will be private and confidential, there are creative ways chaplains can support trans and non-binary folk to tell their stories publicly, such as interactive displays, blogs, and videos.

Learning as a Continual Process

Several chaplains discussed gaps in knowledge regarding trans and non-binary people's experiences and the socio-cultural context in which language and mores are developed (particularly as these can seem to change rapidly for those who are no longer embedded in young people's circles). While the chaplains we interviewed outlined the various training opportunities available on pastoral matters, it may be that specialist training is required on the systemic barriers that trans and non-binary folk negotiate, and on the language currently being used to describe identities. In order to engage fully in faith conversations with staff and students, chaplains may need to learn more about trans-inclusive and non-binary theologies. Secular training on gender variance and sexual diversity is often arranged within universities; in addition, there may be scope for chaplains to request and attend Church-based training. Furthermore, training need not be restricted to formal events; it can be an ongoing process of dialogue directed by trans and non-binary people (which connects back to the first recommendation, with the proviso that trans and non-binary folk should not be expected to be experts on identity and sexuality, neither should they be required to provide unpaid emotional labour).

Recommendation 2: To Learn

As Beardsley and O'Brien (2016 p. 52) state, labels and terms can be both liberating and oppressive depending on the background of the individual person, the current context, and the relationships being developed. We recommend that chaplains and others offering support engage in continuous learning about the changing language and terminology used by trans and non-binary folk and ensure individuals are given the opportunity to communicate which terms they wish to be used, recognising that names and pronoun choices can be fluid and changing. As both Rachel Mann and Christina Beardsley explain, moments of disclosure are 'holy ground': we recommend that chaplains are fully prepared for these moments by reading about trans and non-binary people's journeys and keeping up to date on good practice.

Conversing on Matters of Faith

McMahon's (2016) call for trans people to develop trans-inclusive theology as 'insiders' serves to ensure that trans and non-binary folk with religious beliefs are nurtured in their faith, and are provided with tools that will enable them to resist and challenge exclusionary religious discourse. Whilst trans-inclusive and non-binary theology is flourishing, it runs the risk of being ignored by mainstream (or 'malestream') theology as specialist and marginal, leaving dominant theological discourses unchallenged. Chaplaincy may be an ideal place for trans and non-binary Christians to investigate alternative ways of approaching their faith and to discover the means to form a theology that is affirming and inclusive. We emphasise the need to guard against reproducing the boundaries between dominant and minoritarian theologies, and find that chaplains are well placed to introduce a variety of theological positions to a wider group of people. We have confirmed from the interviews and from some of the literature that there is significant value in trans and non-binary folk gathering to discuss pertinent spiritual matters. Faith-based groups for trans and non-binary people offer a potential community to combat isolation; a space where spiritual lives can be explored with like-minded people. Chaplains can offer a stimulus for such groups; this might require a combined effort across universities where numbers are too small to sustain a group on one campus. The purpose of such faith-based groups will be to offer trans and non-binary folk the opportunity to hone their theological thinking and their leadership potential.

Recommendation 3: To Develop Trans-Inclusive Theology

Based on McMahon's (2016) call for trans people to develop trans-inclusive theology as 'insiders', we recommend that chaplains support or help to establish faith-based groups for trans and non-binary people within and between university chaplaincies to encourage the leadership potential of trans and non-binary Christians and their confidence in matters of faith. We also recommend that trans-inclusive theologies be foregrounded in chaplaincies to guard against reproducing boundaries between privileged, dominant theologies and theologies that are constructed as minoritarian; this involves developing explicit ways of challenging cultural, doctrinal, and theological discourses that exclude trans and non-binary folk (or any others included under the LGBTQ+ banner).

Influencing

Beardsley and O'Brien's work, *This is My Body,* is a valuable resource for chaplains and we borrow from this work to underpin the discussion of the influencing role open to chaplains. Within *This is My Body* there is a strong focus on helping church communities to become more supportive of trans and non-binary folk and to gain more knowledge about their lived experience. While our chaplains have reported having variable working relationships with their diocese, and some may be less able to influence discussions at that level than others, there is the potential for chaplains to act as a two-way bridge: back to the Church from the university as well as representing the Church on campus. For example, one chaplain we interviewed attempts to engage with local churches, partly to gauge where there is an inclusive environment, and partly to stimulate discussions about inclusivity more generally. Chaplains are well placed to see where there is a need for education or forthright interactions in both the university and in the diocese. Thus, chaplains can exercise influence to address gaps in training and knowledge, either fulfilling this need themselves or stimulating others to undertake this work. Further, we have noted that Beardsley and O'Brien (2016) call for diocesan trans and non-binary champions to be appointed; university chaplains can raise this within their own dioceses.

Recommendation 4: To Influence

Where there is a gap in training provision, chaplains can act collectively to plan specialist training events on university campuses. In addition, we have noted that chaplains sometimes feel marginalised in their diocese; even so, from this marginal position, chaplains can influence diocesan authorities to facilitate church-based training to generate knowledge and understanding of trans and non-binary concerns amongst local churches. Beardsley and O'Brien (2016) recommend the appointment of a diocesan champion, with knowledge of trans matters and the structuring of support throughout the Church: we recommend that chaplains point to this recommendation and request that diocesan authorities introduce a trans and non-binary diocesan champion.

Being Visible and Accessible

A major theme in this project is visibility of chaplains on campus in ways that indicate the inclusive, non-judgemental environment of chaplaincy: a message that can be specifically directed at trans and non-binary students and staff. Visibility of the welcome and support extended by chaplains is an element of the process set out by Althaus-Reid (2000):

see, discern, act. As we have discussed above, when chaplains develop signs that are oriented towards trans and non-binary people, this aligns with empowering and healing aspects of their stories and experiences. The following recommendation is drawn from the types of visibility chaplains have communicated with us, as well as being underpinned by the experiences of trans and non-binary staff and students on campus. For example, one interviewee who identifies as trans pointed out visible signs that broadcast certain positive meanings, such as the use of rainbow lanyards and trans-inclusive posters in the chaplaincy; these signs are read both as a welcome and as resistance to negative Church messages. Rainbow symbolism requires thoughtful attention, though, given the problems that may arise from conflating multiple identities under an all-encompassing abbreviation. A current complicating factor is the adoption of the rainbow as a national symbol of the NHS during the coronavirus pandemic; this new use of the rainbow has inaugurated instability in the sign and some LGBTQ+ folk sense a shift in the meaning-making that may undermine the rainbow's political traction (see Hunt, 2020). Alternatively, there is growth of specific trans and non-binary iconography, mainly in the form of flags, that is gaining traction.[49] A valuable addition to the visibility-enhancing activity for chaplains will be the use of trans and non-binary flags, alongside rainbow flags, to signal that they 'see' trans and non-binary folk and that chaplaincies can be seen by them as a source of support.

Chaplains need not act alone; they may also gain visibility as supportive by engaging with campus-wide projects and programmes of activities. Most of our chaplains find it beneficial to be embedded into the cyclical life of the university; there may be avenues for enhancing this integration, if chaplains seek them out. We have also discussed the 'red-letter days' that were raised in the interviews with trans and non-binary folk and with chaplains; this annual cycle of events presents opportunities for trans and non-binary people and chaplaincies to work together. Of particular significance is the Trans Day of Remembrance, which was mentioned in several interviews, and two approaches emerged: one approach is to assist trans people to hold their own event; the other is to act on behalf of trans people, to establish a marker of the event where this might not be a possibility (emotionally or practically) for the trans community on campus. Both approaches have merits, so long as there is adequate dialogue with local trans folk to establish which is the

[49] The trans flag consists of five horizontal stripes, two light blue, two pink, with a white stripe in the centre. The non-binary flag is made up of yellow, white, purple and black stripes.

most appropriate option. Further, Dowd and Beardsley (2018; 2020) offer resources for this event.

In addition, we link visibility with accessibility. Simply establishing a visible presence that signals inclusivity might not be sufficient for trans and non-binary folk to approach the chaplaincy for support: they need to know what space is available to them, how to access it, who to approach for listening and what the expectations are when entering chaplaincy space. Chaplaincies need to broadcast accessibility information as widely as possible, alongside raising their level of visibility.

Recommendation 5: To Be Visible

Whilst the rainbow is widely recognised as a positive sign for LGBTQ+ people, we recommend that chaplaincies also explore using specific trans and non-binary iconography to establish visibility that is not subsumed into a generic LGBTQ+ sign. We recommend that chaplains use posters, postcards and displays to establish visibility of support and welcome all year round. We recommend that chaplains take advantage of the early opportunity to establish a presence at the beginning of the academic year by being fully involved in Welcome Week/Freshers' Week/Induction Week. Several chaplains are already developing this annual activity and there may be ways of enhancing involvement in the events taking place at the start of the academic year to broadcast the signs of welcome specifically for trans and non-binary people. We also recommend that chaplains use the established calendar of events – LGBT+ History Month, Trans Day of Visibility, Trans Day of Remembrance, Pride and so on - to enhance the visibility of the support offered to trans and non-binary folk, whilst ensuring that chaplains only act 'on behalf of' the trans community when called upon to do so. Annual visibility in internationally recognised trans and non-binary events, as well as local ones, gives rhythm and continuity to chaplaincy support and provides opportunities to develop working relationships with trans and non-binary students and staff.

Recommendation 6: To Be Accessible

Trans and non-binary people who do not have a faith may wish to access quiet, private space, but might not be familiar with the ways in which the chaplaincy space works. We recommend that chaplains explore the possibilities for making their quiet spaces more accessible with clear guidance for students on how to use the space, when it is available for quiet time alone, whom to ask about the space and so on. Other significant

considerations chaplains should consider when developing the accessibility of the chaplaincy include: the balance between providing practical and emotional support, stepping back from a 'fixing' role, examining unconscious or implicit bias and personal theological positioning, exploring what space and time is made available in the chaplaincy to facilitate a confidential and private disclosure.

Collaborating

Whilst this project has focused in places on the faith lives of trans and non-binary students and staff, most participants recognise that support of a whole person, whether or not they have a religious faith, is the aim of chaplaincies. Thus, chaplains, whilst having a faith speciality in the type of guidance they can offer, enjoy a privileged position in the wider context of university life. Consequently, chaplains need to be diligent in their utilisation of privilege,[50] so as to centre the marginalised. On the one hand, this requires chaplains to be embedded into the university systems of support and some chaplains are already working in this way; on the other hand, there are multiple levels at which chaplains can provide input and work with others to change the systemic barriers to flourishing faced by trans and non-binary folk. Several chaplains described their role as 'bridge-building' and there may be scope to explore the extent to which chaplains can facilitate understanding between campus groups. The interviews with chaplains revealed the sometimes fraught relationships with Christian Unions, given the predominance of conservative beliefs about gender and sexuality therein. For some chaplains, this means such groups are considered 'unsafe' for trans and non-binary people (and for LGBTQ+ folk in general). We have discussed how chaplains are well placed to critique the rendering of spaces as unsafe and we recommend that chaplains explore further collaboration with faith groups, and other groups on campus (such as Student Unions), so as to contribute to the building of a culture in which trans and non-binary people fully belong and in which they are able to flourish. We suggest that this work issues from the opening of dialogue about faith, belief, gender and sexual identities amongst people of all faiths and beliefs. Furthermore, there is scope for our interviewed chaplains to collaborate as a group, to continue the discussions begun by participating in this project; this could take the form of a working group.

[50] A discussion would be useful about Christian privilege and White privilege and how chaplaincies can be made more diverse through recruitment of BAME people for paid and voluntary posts and through the engagement with other faith groups.

Recommendation 7: To Collaborate

We recommend that chaplains work with university groups, including Student Unions, on collective trans and non-binary affirmative activities exploring networking opportunities between chaplaincy and other staff and student bodies (including LGBTQ+ groups and faith groups) – such as academic symposia or social events - with the purpose of developing dialogue at the intersections of faith, belief, gender, and sexual identities. There is scope for an ongoing working group, using this project as a springboard, to continue to collaborate with trans and non-binary people and chaplains to develop and share ideas and good practice. Beardsley and O'Brien (2016) recommend that religious debate takes place in the context of modern medical and psychological understanding and this requires introducing the appropriate expertise into the discussion. Where chaplains are taking on a more proactive role in stimulating learning on campus and within the diocese, we recommend that such discussions are led and directed by trans and non-binary people and allied expertise (with the proviso that trans and non-binary people should not be expected to be experts or to bear the burden of educating others, unless they choose to put themselves forward for this task).

Resourcing

In conjunction with listening to and learning from trans and non-binary folk, resources should be collated. A strong theme in the interviews with chaplains is the role of signposting to local churches that are perceived as inclusive. Detailed local knowledge and gaining feedback about experiences of churches from trans and non-binary people is invaluable in building a comprehensive picture of local worshipping communities. To maintain this knowledge (and keep it up to date) in chaplaincies will require that chaplains undertake research and pass on this invaluable information, particularly to those new to the area and to incoming chaplains, assistants and volunteers.

Chaplaincies may already have policies about how they work. As a counterpart of the listening process in the first recommendation, resourceful chaplains will be enabled to apply new understanding to any policies, materials, and resources that are used by chaplaincies. In addition to this, chaplains might identify a need to develop new resources that are specifically aimed at trans and non-binary folk, such as materials that signpost to local and national groups, other forms of support and services, and specialist contacts on campus.

Recommendation 8: To Resource

Chaplains stated in the interviews that they need to understand the character of churches in their diocese, if they are to signpost staff and students to places of worship that are wholly welcoming of trans and non-binary folk. We recommend that chaplains maintain an up-to-date list of places of worship of different denominations and religions that are known to be inclusive and 'safe': this will require regular research on the part of chaplains to ensure their knowledge is current, including encouraging feedback from trans and non-binary church attendees regarding their experiences of churches. We also recommend that chaplaincies work with trans and non-binary students and staff to review and/or develop trans-inclusive policies and materials that are used in the chaplaincy, including posters and leaflets for display and distribution, incorporating details of local and national trans and non-binary support services.

Recommended Reading

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I feel well listened to, understood, and insightfully interpreted back to myself. I warmly commend this report. Based on interviews with chaplains, staff and students the researchers explore the pivotal role that chaplaincies can play among a 'team of allies' of trans and non-binary staff and students.

Revd Dr Christina Beardsley

The authors of this ground-breaking and thought-provoking report have adopted a refreshingly inclusive approach to their project. Rather than hypothesising about what gender-diverse individuals may or may not need to empower them in academic settings, McIntosh and Jagger directly consulted trans and non-binary staff and students about their experiences of life in higher education. Constructive recommendations are based on the research evidence and have been developed in collaboration with the research participants. This should be required reading for anyone who teaches or works with trans and non-binary individuals in higher education.

Dr Michael Bonshor

This research was conducted by the Centre for Religion in Society at York St John University and made possible by financial assistance from the Church Universities Fund.

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