



Latest network figures

483
(May 2026)

446
(Dec 2025)

415
(Dec 2024)

247
(Dec 2022)

80
(Dec 2019)

1
(Dec 2014)



From Debbie Thrower, founder and pioneer of Anna Chaplaincy

Hello! I want to share with you the impressive regional growth of Anna Chaplaincy. The photo above captured the celebratory mood in Winchester Cathedral when crowds of Hampshire Anna Chaplains and supporters gathered to mark a key turning point for our work in that diocese.

We bring you stories of who's coming forward to join in this work and why. This is a ministry of presence, and wherever there's a local coordinator in an area, Anna Chaplains and Anna Friends increase even more rapidly. We now have a forum of local coordinators across many parts of the UK, bringing benefits to the network and to the older people whose needs they're seeking to meet. There's also a cohort of retired Anna Chaplains and Anna Friends who might have stepped back from front-line ministry but remain a significant part of the movement they helped pioneer.

Plus, we're publishing some new resources. So, it all adds up to more Anna Chaplains serving more effectively and flourishing in their ministry and beyond!

Best wishes

Network growth: numbers are rising

The network is growing rapidly. In the past six months, more Anna Chaplains have been commissioned than in the whole of the previous twelve months. More than 30 have joined since December 2025.

Areas where new Anna Chaplains are joining the network include: Kent, Essex, Norfolk, Staffordshire, Derbyshire, South London, Surrey, Dorset, Hampshire, and the East Riding of Yorkshire.

Across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight we now have one hundred Anna Chaplains and their Anna Friends –

each of them good listeners and people who embody hopefulness.

Bishop of Southampton, Rhiannon King, said at the choral evensong celebrating Anna Chaplaincy in Winchester Cathedral in February:

'I am a huge fan of Anna Chaplaincy.'

Anna Chaplain Frances Attwood spoke for many when she said:

'I was greatly encouraged by Bishop Rhiannon's sermon, showing that she not only understands

the importance of ministry to older people, but that she is so much behind us too. It is indeed fitting that Winchester Diocese, having given birth to Anna Chaplaincy, takes on this as one of its priorities.'



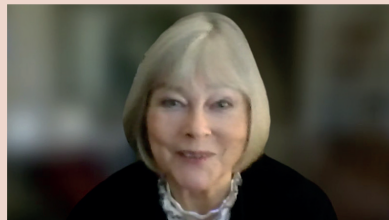
The bishop of Southampton and Winchester diocesan and cathedral clergy with BRF Ministries colleagues.

'Alumni'

The net growth that is happening is despite those also retiring from being Anna Chaplains. Some have given a decade or more of sustained service. There are 140 of what we like to call 'alumni'. We keep in touch via the blog, this newsletter, and online get-togethers.

Our focus on this alumni network includes welcoming their prayer support, urging them to keep on the look out for prospective new

Anna Chaplains, and offering encouragement to them in their own retirements.



Debbie Thrower speaking at the first online get-together at New Year.



Retired Anna Chaplain, Pam Shaw and the Community Friendship Café.

Pam Shaw in Lowestoft, Suffolk, is a case in point:

'The changing view as we get older (I'm now 87) can be something of a challenge, as I have discovered these past few months, having had to step back from everything following a mild stroke last summer.'

However, Pam adds:

'I now bake some cakes each week for our Community Friendship Café which I had started, and sometimes they find it helpful if I go round the tables to say hello to people as the staff themselves are so busy serving. Two people had turned up at the café from another church who want to start up a similar venture, asking about set-up costs, for which the staff had neither the facts available nor time to talk about it, so I was able to do just that.'

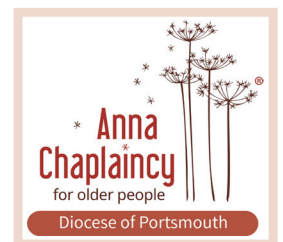
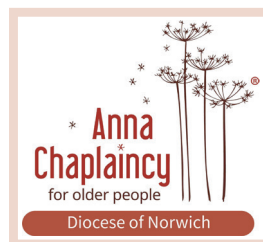
Her response when faced with empty days and a blank diary was to make a plan: 'to make the most of every single minute, taking whatever happens and making something of it.'

Cross-denominational reach

A deeper dive into the Anna Chaplaincy growth statistics shows just how varied are the different denominations involved.

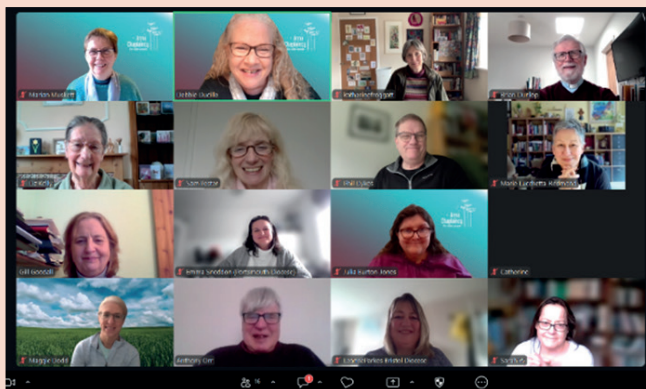
The majority are Anglicans, reflecting the origins of Anna Chaplaincy in Alton, Hampshire – where it was pioneered through a covenant-partnership between Anglicans and Methodists in the town.

Across England and Wales there are now 19 (out of 48) Anglican Dioceses with a head licence agreement – that's the legal paperwork which enables a smooth process for using the trademarked Anna Chaplaincy name across a geographical area.



Fifteen Methodist Circuits or ecumenical teams also have head licence agreements, as do two Baptist Associations. Two Roman Catholic dioceses are involved with our ministry via Caritas, the confederation of Catholic organisations.

Our coordinators' forum



A recent forum meeting with the core team at BRF Ministries.

We have built a 24-strong local coordinator forum representing different areas of the country and particular groupings of Anna Chaplains. They meet together online quarterly.

Annie Jefferies

is a founding member. She coordinates Anna Chaplaincy in Exeter Diocese, a retirement hotspot; there are now more people in Devon over 70 than under the age of five. Her diocese boasts more Anna Chaplains than any other in the country currently (with Portsmouth Diocese close behind), 'yet we could treble them and still need more,' she says.



Annie Jefferies, coordinator for Exeter Diocese.

Maggie Dodd in St Albans coordinates work on her busy 'patch' in Hertfordshire. From compiling a new booklet each year signposting local events, clubs, and resources for older people, to campaigning against digital exclusion among those in older age, Maggie is a well-known face in her area and has a team of other chaplains and Anna Friends ministering with her.



Maggie Dodd and tea party, St Albans.

Liz Kelly has been an Anna Chaplain since 2021 – the first in her area. She is also the local coordinator for Peterborough Diocese. Liz trains Anna Chaplains, running a course for 15 people this year, several of whom are set to be commissioned soon, and she is planning another course this summer. She remarks:

'The new ones coming through are such a diverse bunch, as we are a very big, spread-out diocese.'

The bishop of Peterborough, Debbie Sellin, is a strong advocate for what Liz is doing. Liz said:

'It makes a tremendous amount of difference having her support. We are pushing at an open door with Anna Chaplaincy.'

Liz held quiet days for the area's nine Anna Chaplains and Bishop Debbie sent along a member of her staff with a handwritten card for every participant, thanking them for all they do.

Liz is glad to be part of our national coordinator forum because of the value of seeing how practices vary in different parts of the country and the fact that each member can be of help to one another. Liz said:

'Anna Chaplaincy is really the best thing I have done in years. I enjoy it so much!'

Who else is stepping forward to be an Anna Chaplain?

Well, they come from all points of the compass and all sorts of backgrounds, bringing with them useful skills from previous occupations.



Anna Chaplain and local coordinator, Liz Kelly.

Alison Chapman is a trained nurse, has also been a residential care home assistant, and in her 20s worked in a school for hearing impaired children.



Anna Chaplain,
Alison Chapman.

'Almost every conversation required a lot of perseverance in either seeking to understand what a child was saying, or in seeking to make myself understood.'

Yet, it was visiting her father when he moved into care in older age which has, perhaps, influenced her most:

'I learnt so much in this process and came to appreciate the huge difference spiritual care made to his quality of life.'

Alison is now an Anna Chaplain through her own Assemblies of God church in Oxford, and part of her ministry includes weekly chapel services at St Luke's nursing home in the city.

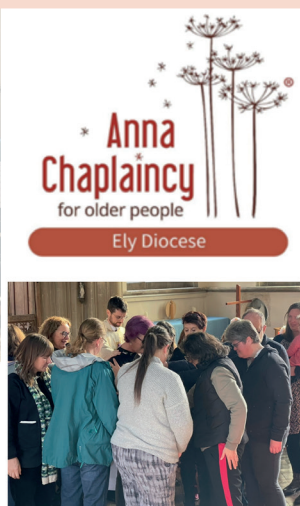
'It has truly been a blessing to go to that nursing home and be a part of the lives there with the residents.'

Lois Read trained as a nurse in the 1970s. She was commissioned last year as an Anna Chaplain in Ely Diocese:

'I am doing what I was made to do. It would be lovely to develop our ministry to the elderly in the community as well as the church, giving people opportunities to serve our older people.'



Lois was recently commissioned as an Anna Chaplain in the Diocese of Ely



Jason Kennedy in Littleover, Derby, has taken on a paid Anna Chaplaincy role in his church. He became aware of Anna Chaplaincy while on holiday in the Lake District. 'I walked into a church in Kendal and saw a display about it.'



The Revd Jason Kennedy.

He had already grown to love the ministry in care homes he was offering in his Derbyshire parishes and he sees becoming an Anna Chaplain as the best way to boost 'a neglected ministry among a forgotten generation.'

He hugely appreciated the six-week Anna Chaplaincy training course and says his main objective is to gather a team of Anna Friends to volunteer alongside him.

We're delighted to see more male Anna Chaplains like Jason coming forward – more than 50 of them to date. It's timely, as 'The State of Ageing Report 2026' (from the Centre for Ageing Better) shows a demographic shift towards more older men living alone these days.

If you know someone who might make a good candidate, do ask them to get in touch annachaplaincy@brf.org.uk. We hold regular online introductions to Anna Chaplaincy.

Pastoral supervision offer

The network chaplain role held by Alex Burn is set to expand, as are our peer support Gold Groups (featured in our last newsletter), with both being fully implemented this year after successful pilots.



There's also a wonderful opportunity thanks to the charity St Luke's for Clergy Wellbeing. 'Lone' Anna Chaplains are being offered first pick to receive time-limited free pastoral supervision by their trainee supervisors. Debbe Ducille, Anna Chaplaincy ministry lead says:

'It's hoped this experience will inspire Anna Chaplains who are without the benefit of a local team to seek out local pastoral supervision for themselves'

(or, indeed, join one of the new Gold Groups starting up). The national Anna Chaplaincy team are deeply grateful to St Luke's for extending this generous invitation to our network: such collaborations lend substantial value and professionalism to the support structures we want to offer.'

Social prescribing

More Anna Chaplains are reporting good links with their GP surgeries and new social prescribing initiatives. Emily Spencer in Alton was telling a local group for the hard of hearing recently how social prescribing is a growing aspect of her work in the Hampshire market town.



*Alton Anna Chaplain,
Emily Spencer.*

It's a growing trend nationally, with similar moves taking place in St Austell, Cornwall, where Anna Chaplain Jane Wingrove joined a Truro-based podcast recently to tell how her team of Anna Friends are receiving referrals relating to people's spiritual needs in the town via family doctors.

More training opportunities

We are so proud that Julia Burton-Jones has been made an honorary lay canon in Rochester Diocese. Well done Julia! She recently resigned from being the Anna Chaplaincy lead for both Rochester and Canterbury Dioceses and a successor is being sought. Meanwhile, this means she can boost her hours working for the national Anna Chaplaincy team at BRF Ministries.



*Canon Julia Burton-Jones,
Anna Chaplaincy training and
development lead.*

Julia works with a team of experienced freelance trainers, writing and delivering programmes for Anna Chaplains across the UK. To date, the online Anna Chaplaincy training course has been run more than 60 times since 2021 – and completed by 640 learners.

Spiritual Care Series and other resources

Several new resources to support spiritual care in later life are being released by BRF Ministries this year. A new version of the highly acclaimed Spiritual Care Series for self-directed learning has been created by colleagues in Australia, with new video material featuring Julia and Anne Milton-Worsell from the training team.



Two Anna Chaplains, Frances Attwood and Wendy Gleadle, have collaborated on a new book entitled *Dementia, God, and the Church* being published in July. Wendy examines the difficulties of maintaining religious beliefs as cognition declines. Frances asks how churches can better support those living with dementia, examining what they and those around them find helpful.

The five carers guides BRF Ministries published for care staff during the pandemic have been updated and combined into a single book – *Enabling Spiritual Care*:



A guide for care home staff, written by Julia Burton-Jones, Debbie Thrower, Catriona Foster, and Sally Rees. This guide aims to resource care home staff in meeting the spiritual needs of residents, helping them to explore the similarities and differences between religious care and spiritual care and to grasp the ways all older people have spiritual needs.

Books...

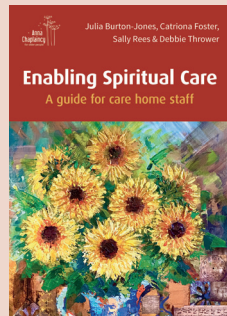
Enabling Spiritual Care

A guide for care home staff

Julia Burton-Jones, Catriona Foster, Sally Rees,
and Debbie Thrower

978 1 80039 551 0 | £9.99 | July 2026

Drawing from expertise developed through Anna Chaplaincy, this book enables members of care home staff teams to understand and facilitate the provision of spiritual care for residents. It explains the need for religious care, focusing on older people who are Christians, and provides examples of prayers, hymns, and services that can be used. There are chapters on facilitating worship with groups and individuals, offering end-of-life spiritual care and supporting those who are unable to attend a funeral. There are also sections on self-care and attending to your own spiritual needs. This book focuses on spiritual care from a Christian perspective, but all faiths and belief systems are respected.

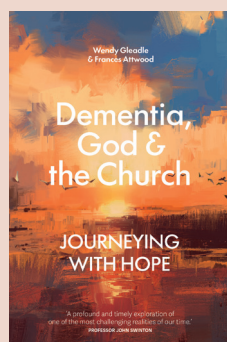


Dementia, God and the Church

Journeying with hope

Wendy Gleadle and Frances Attwood
978 1 80039 433 9 | £12.99 | July 2026

Written by two practitioners in this field, *Dementia, God and the Church* aims to show how person-centred approaches to dementia can provide hope. Wendy Gleadle first examines the difficulties of maintaining religious beliefs as cognition declines, and the implications if faith is not only cognitive, but an expression of the whole



person, such as emotions and relationships, the arts and creativity. Frances Attwood asks how churches can better support those living with dementia, through examining what they and their families and carers find helpful and want most. Throughout, space is given to first-hand stories of those with dementia, those working with them and those caring for them.

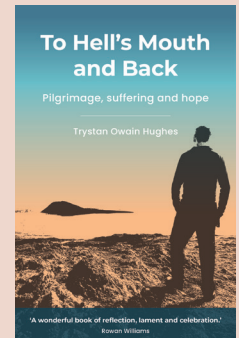
To Hell's Mouth and Back

Pilgrimage, suffering and hope

Trystan Owain Hughes

978 1 80039 426 1 | £9.99 | October 2025

After a gruelling 140-mile pilgrimage walking across the rugged terrain of North Wales, Trystan Owain Hughes finds himself facing another, very different pilgrimage as he recovers from a serious injury sustained on the walk. In *To Hell's Mouth and Back* he explores his experience of suffering, considering how God can redeem and transform pain and disability, and examines how common experiences of pilgrimage are echoed in the challenges of our life journeys. Along the way, the reader is led to consider the journeys we all face, as we search for God's presence and hope in our joys and pains.



All available at brfresources.org.uk

Anna Chaplaincy is a gracious Christian offering of spiritual and emotional care to all older people and their carers, in residential homes and the wider community. It is for people of strong, little or no faith.

All churches recruit, commission and support *their own* Anna Chaplains by agreement with BRF Ministries. Yet more Christian denominations are getting involved – Baptists, Catholics, free evangelicals, Methodists, the Elim Pentecostal Church and many more.

Our terrific core supporters already provide 40% of Anna Chaplaincy's central resources and the aim is to grow this as we become even more sustainable. Our vision is for Anna Chaplaincy to be available for all who need support in every community across the UK!

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