CHAPTER 31

RELIGION AND BELIEF

(Sponsor: NAVY CHAPLAINCY-COTF EA)

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CHAPTER 31

RELIGION AND BELIEF

SECTION 1

THE ROYAL NAVY RELIGION AND BELIEF POLICY[1]

3101. Introduction

a. This chapter presents the Royal Navy's policy on Religion and Belief. It explains the ways in which the Naval Chaplaincy Service facilitates and promotes this policy. Section 1 includes both the Religion and Belief policy, and a summary of the external policies and legislation which inform our position. Section 2 lists common religious and belief practices, which the RN should accommodate in accordance with legislation and our own Religion and Belief policy. Section 3 gives a brief outline of the Naval Chaplaincy Service.

b. Religion and belief have a significant effect upon the morale, motivation and values of individual adherents. According to the Office of National Statistics the number of individuals in the UK describing themselves as Christian has decreased over the past decade, whilst there has been a rise in number among certain denominations, including Pentecostalism, and non-aligned or independent churches. In addition, there has been a rise in numbers of people who identify as non-religious or who follow other religions, faiths and belief systems, including Islam and Paganism. There has also been a rise in those who identify as 'spiritual' but not 'religious'.

c. The Royal Navy's Policy on religion and belief, as presented within this chapter, is informed by - and in accordance with - current government legislation and MOD Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) policy.

[1] Religion or belief are defined in the regulations as any religion, religious belief, or similar philosophical belief. Characteristics such as collective worship, a clear belief system or a profound philosophical belief affecting an individual's way of life or view of the world are likely to be relevant in determining what constitutes a religion or belief.

3102. The Royal Navy Policy on Religion and Belief

a. The influence of religion and belief permeates our world and their influence over global politics has risen over the past fifty years. Religion and belief can provide a specific moral compass and ethical viewpoint for many people. Eight in ten people worldwide still identify with a religion. Evidence shows that – beyond individual practice – faith is increasingly moving into the public sphere and people of faith are becoming key partners in organisations aimed at tackling a varied set of global challenges – a sign of the important role of faith leaders and communities in bringing about social change[2]. The number of people expressing religious affiliation around the world is rising. This is largely due to the growth of Islam in the Middle East, Africa and the Far East, and the growth of Christianity in China and Eastern Europe, following the dissolution of the USSR. In addition, the growth in religious adherents within highly-developed countries (such as Japan and South Korea) challenges the view that religion and belief systems are old-fashioned, archaic, or primitive. A Royal Navy that understands diversity of faith and belief provides operational advantage in engagement of cultures during global operations.

b. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion[3]. While an individual's religion or belief is a private matter the Royal Navy, as a modern employer, recognises its moral and legal responsibilities to support and protect individuals from any form of discrimination, harassment, victimisation or bullying, due to an individual's religion or belief, or perception of their religion or belief.

c. Notwithstanding that religion and belief are a protected characteristic in law; they are often central to an individual's identity. As a core characteristic of an individual's identity, religion or belief can be a source of personal resilience and inform their moral compass, bringing a sense of ultimate meaning and belonging to something greater than themself. It can help people be comfortable with uncertainty, strengthen a person's morale, and improve their operational capability. This can also be true at a collective level among a group of religious people, if they are allowed to practice their religion or belief without hindrance. In these ways, religion or belief can indirectly add value to teams and units providing a 'spiritual edge' to the physical, moral and conceptual components of fighting power.

d. For these reasons it is the duty of all levels of leadership to make adequate provision for the spiritual and moral needs of all personnel and Commanding Officers are to set a good example in this respect. The Royal Navy also allows people to educate or inform others about their religion or belief, where the goal of this education is to improve understanding, rather than for the purpose of promoting or converting people to their religion or belief.

[2] World Economic Forum, 2014

[3] European Convention on Human Rights, Article 9. (1) 'Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance. (2) Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others'.

e. The Naval Chaplaincy Service has a long-standing tradition of offering and providing non-religious pastoral care to support Service Personnel of any faiths or belief. In order to reflect the diverse nature and needs of our Service Personnel chaplains represent various Christian denominations and major World Faiths, providing religious advice from the Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh traditions.

3103. The Equality Act 2010

a. The Royal Navy's policy on Religion and Belief is informed by, and in accordance with, the Equality Act 2010. The purpose of the Equality Act 2010 is to protect individuals from discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act across a variety of sectors, which includes the workplace. It also required the Royal Navy, as a public body, to give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

b. The Equality Act 2010 lists nine Protected Characteristics on the basis of which it is unlawful to discriminate. These include Religion or Belief, Sex, Race, Gender Reassignment, Sexual Orientation, Marriage or Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Age and Disability[4]. The Equality Act 2010 applies to all religions, and to beliefs including both religious beliefs and philosophical beliefs. It encompasses the lack of religion or belief and also protects those perceived to hold a particular religion or belief, whether or not the person actually holds that religion or belief. In this way it protects everyone from discrimination on grounds of religion or belief.

c. No one protected characteristic has precedence over another. We are all beholden to the prohibitions on discrimination and harassment within the Equality Act. Thus, the Service requires personnel to work alongside others, regardless of what religion or belief they may hold, or other protected characteristics they may have. The right to hold a religion or belief and to express those beliefs must be balanced against the rights of other protected groups. We must be tolerant of the differences between us all and ensure that whilst we may all hold different beliefs, they are not manifested in a way that amounts to unlawful discrimination of others, or breaches other provisions of the Equality Act.

3104. MOD Guide on Religion and Belief in the Armed Forces

The Royal Navy's policy on religion and belief is informed by the MOD Diversity Policy and its Guide on Religion and Belief in the Armed Forces. The Guide and any amendments to it, provide direction on specific aspects of religion and belief within the Armed Forces and Civil Service, such as fasting, prayer, and religious dress codes.

3105. Potential Conflict Between Religious Belief and the Equality Act

a. The Royal Navy has a duty to enforce the Equality Act 2010 with regard to all nine Protected Characteristics, although there are exemptions in relation to age and disability where necessary to safeguard combat effectiveness. In some situations, conflict may arise between different individuals or groups whose rights are protected

[4] An exemption exists within the regulations in relation to age and disability where necessary in order to safeguard the combat effectiveness of the armed forces.

by this act. The right for everyone to be treated with dignity and respect in the workplace applies irrespective of religion or belief.

b. Any concerns may either be raised to the local D&I adviser or chaplain, directly or via the appropriate networks, who can assist in raising issues to command or directly with the local command or the Chaplain of the Fleet's Office.

3106. The Royal Navy's Diversity and Inclusion Policy

a. The Royal Navy's Policy on Religion and Belief is informed by, and in accordance with, the Royal Navy's Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) policy. The RN D&I policy draws upon the Armed Forces Act 2006, the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. The RN D&I policy forms the basis for all Royal Navy D&I training, guidance and management of complaints. It can be found at BRd3, Chapter 30.

b. The RN D&I policy does not offer any specific guidance on religion and belief. Rather, it is a general policy stating the Royal Navy's commitment to create an inclusive workforce, to recognise the value of diversity, and to challenge any form of discrimination, bullying or harassment based on the nine protected characteristics named within the 2010 Equality Act.

3107. The Role of The Chaplaincy Service in Supporting Religion and Belief

a. The Naval Chaplaincy Service (NCS) plays a central role in promoting and developing the Royal Navy's policy on religion and belief and the Chaplain of the Fleet acts as Head of Profession with regard to chaplaincy across the Royal Navy.

b. Further information concerning the Naval Chaplaincy Service is available from the Chaplain of the Fleet's Office[5] and can also be found in the following publications:

(1) BRd 2 - The Queen's Regulations for the Royal Navy.

(2) BRd 439 - Royal Naval Chaplaincy.

[5] NAVYCHAPLAINCY-GROUPMAILBOX@mod.gov.uk

SECTION 2

FACILITATING RELIGION AND BELIEF PRACTICES

3108. Facilitating Religion and Belief Requirements within the Royal Navy

a. Within the Royal Navy, an individual's religion or belief-system is treated as a private matter. However, as an employer, the Royal Navy aims to create a safe and just environment, in which all individuals can fulfil their potential. This includes supporting Service Personnel in their religious or belief-based identity. The Royal Navy achieves this objective by sanctioning and facilitating religious or belief-based activities such as daily prayer and worship, ceremonies and rituals, mediation facilities, religious dress code requirements, and diets.

b. The Royal Navy make every effort to respect and accommodate religious or belief-based activities, dress codes and diets. However, these are subject to the vital considerations of operational effectiveness and health and safety policy. For these reasons, individuals may need to be flexible, particularly when this is in the interests of their own safety or that of their colleagues.

c. Commanding Officers and line managers should consider whether their policies, rules or procedures put someone of a particular religion or belief at a particular disadvantage and what changes can be made to support individuals. In most cases, meeting an individual's religious or belief-based needs will require little change. If it is not possible to make such changes, Commanding Officers must be able to justify that their chosen route can be demonstrated to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

d. Reasonable requests to facilitate religion and belief-based requirements must be considered objectively and met wherever practical. Blanket policies or refusals may constitute discrimination unless justifiable as a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. An example of this would be a scenario where the granting of leave for a religious holiday would substantially impact on a unit's or team's capability. Units are often deployed over Christmas and Easter when most would rather be on leave.

3109. Facilitating The Needs of Emerging Religions and Beliefs

a. The Royal Navy Religion and Belief Policy seeks to protect and support all Service Personnel in their chosen religion or belief. This includes personnel who are adherents to established 'world' faiths, and those Service Personnel who are adherents to smaller, or emerging religions or beliefs.

b. In some cases, where an emerging religion or belief system is multi-faceted, with multiple permutations and no one accepted form of worship, doctrine, ethical codes, practises, and scriptural points of reference, it may take time to formulate policy or practices that are consistent with other religions or beliefs.

c. Personnel who perceive that their religion or belief-based practices are not being facilitated should first speak to their Command. If in doubt, Command should approach the Naval Chaplaincy Service HQ or NCHQ D&I Team for guidance, who will, in turn, approach the appropriate internal or external bodies and consult the appropriate legislation.

3110. Potentially Harmful Ideologies or Movements

Some religious or belief movements, including cults, sects or extremist groups and ideologies, may be damaging to national security, operational effectiveness, contrary to the Royal Navy's values and standards or detrimental to the well-being of individuals. Command is to be kept informed of any individual who may fall into this category. If in doubt as to how to respond to the situation, Command should engage with the NCHQ D&I Team or the Naval Chaplaincy Service HQ for guidance.

3111. Facilities for Prayer during the Working Day

a. Some religions require their followers to pray at specific times during the day. Individuals should discuss their needs with their chain of command and every effort should be made to support such needs.

b. The Equality Act 2010 does not require employers to provide time off, or facilities to enable personnel to meet religious observances in the workplace. Notwithstanding this, it is MOD policy to make such provision where circumstances allow.

(1) **Time.** Personnel will normally be expected to use break times for their religious observances. Time off for religious observances such as a prayer session during exercises or operations may have to be delayed or deferred due to unit activities.

(2) **Location.** Wherever practicable, areas for worship or contemplation should be made available in all MOD sites and Service establishments. This includes ships and submarines when deployed.

3112. Provision of Facilities for Prayer, Worship and Meditation

a. Religious organisations traditionally use a purpose-built building for prayer, worship and festivals. The Royal Navy recognises this requirement.

b. **Churches.** All shore-based establishments and Capital Ships have churches or church compartments. Commanding Officers and line managers are responsible for initiating administrative action through their Property Manager/Site Estate Representative for the provision of churches and church rooms permitted under the appropriate scale (JSP 315). When a church or church room is not available, Commanding Officers are to ensure that adequate and worthy accommodation is made available for the conduct of worship.

c. **Prayer, Meditation and Quiet Rooms.** A practising member of a faith or belief group deployed serving onboard a ship or in an establishment is to be afforded the provision of a space which may be used as a prayer, meditation or quiet room. Where personnel of a faith or belief group do not have the requisite furniture and/or items of significance which are recognised as essential to the practising of their faith or belief, the local budget holder should be approached for assistance in securing such items.

3113. Parades, Funerals and Acts of Worship

a. Service Personnel should not be compelled to attend religious services, be that of their own belief or one different to their own.

b. Service Personnel are however required to attend Parades, Divisions and other national or important ceremonial events or musters of the Ship's Company (e.g. Armistice Day, Remembrance and Memorial Ceremonies, Commissioning and Decommissioning). By long-standing tradition, these events often include elements of public prayer and reflection. In addition, Service Personnel may be required to attend Acts of Remembrance which are contained within the context of a religious service. When attending these events, all Service Personnel are required to follow all Parade Orders including when appropriate the removal of headdress (except as detailed at para 3825 sub para g), and to remain on Parade as ordered for the duration of the service. However, they are not required to follow the actual act of prayer or reflection. Their presence does not imply any participation, agreement or otherwise, in any religious or belief elements of the event.

c. Service Personnel may also be required to attend a civic ceremony or Service Funeral as a representative duty or as a member of a Guard of Honour, where the service or ceremony follows a rite associated with a religion or belief different from their own. In these situations, Service Personnel are required to follow all parade orders including when appropriate the removal of headdress (except as detailed at Para 3825 sub para g), and to remain in the required locations as ordered for the duration of the events. However, they are not required to assent to any prayer or follow the actual act of worship or reflection.

3114. Requests for Leave for Religious Festivals/Holidays

a. Many religions and beliefs have special festivals, ceremonies or spiritual observance days. An individual may request annual leave to attend activities associated with one of these events. Commanding Officers and line managers should make every effort to allow individuals time-off to honour these religious festivals or holidays[6].

b. Individuals should give as much notice as possible when requesting leave and bear in mind that a number of their colleagues may request leave at the same time.

[6] JSP 760, Section 6 - Sacred Festivals.

c. Requests for annual leave for special festivals or holidays need to be considered objectively and fairly. Where there are numerous requests for leave at the same time, care should be taken to ensure that leave is granted according to fair and objective criteria. It is important not to make assumptions on the basis of an individual's actual or perceived religion or belief. For example, it should not be assumed that non-Christians will be prepared to work during the Christmas holiday period.

d. The practice of operating a holiday system – whereby the unit closes for specific periods, such as for summer 'block' leave – may prevent individuals from taking leave at times of specific significance to their religion or belief. In this way, the unit may be indirectly discriminating against them. However, such indirect discrimination is not judged to be unlawful if it can be justified as a proportionate means to meet a legitimate aim such as for operational or business reasons.

3115. Dress, Hair, and Tattoos

a. Some religions or beliefs require their adherents to wear specific items of clothing, or to grow their hair. The Royal Navy recognises this need to observe specific codes of dress and appearance. Naval uniform regulations cover this at Chapter 38 of this BR, Section 2 (Cultural and Religious Differences).

b. When Command assesses a request, it is important to note that the Royal Navy distinguishes between the requirements of devout faith, which shall be allowed where operationally practicable, and the cultural and social customs of a particular group, which may be accommodated where disciplinary prudence permits. When assessing a request, it is recommended that the appropriate faith networks, faith advisers and chaplaincy are consulted.

c. Hair, including facial hair, may be grown in excess of the regulation length, if for legitimate religious or belief reasons (Para 3818, sub para 5). To qualify as such, the facial hair must be grown as a tenet of a faith, by an adherent to that faith. Para 3818 also notes that 'any faith or practice must be clearly established by an individual and not simply deemed as having been undertaken in order to defy the regulations contained within this BR'.

d. Tattoos with particular religious or belief significance are deemed to be acceptable, if in accordance with the overall rules concerning tattoos within the Royal Navy. However, a tattoo is judged to be unacceptable if it encourages a negative view of another religion or belief or other Protected Characteristics. (Para 3817 and Annex 38B).

3116. Religious or Belief Artefacts, Symbols and Jewellery

a. Some religions or beliefs require their adherents to wear specific items of jewellery, or to possess items or artefacts of symbolic significance. These can include symbolic or ritual weapons. For example, within the Sikh faith, adults wear the *Kangha* (comb), the *Kara* (bracelet), and carry a *Kirpan* (knife). Similarly, some Pagans may wish to wear an amulet or bracelet, and to possess a knife and/or a small pelt altar covering for their rituals.

b. The Royal Navy recognises the importance of these elements to certain religions and beliefs. In general, the wearing of jewellery is allowed in accordance with the dress codes contained within BR Chapter 38.

c. In certain circumstances, the wearing of jewellery might not be possible, due to the risk it poses to Health and Safety. In this situation, the Health and Safety of the individual or other members of the unit or ships company will take precedence over the accommodation of the religious or belief practice. In these circumstances, it should be possible to find a compromise, whereby the adherent can honour their tradition while reducing the risk. For example, while it would be inappropriate for a chef to wear a bracelet or amulet with an image hanging from it, it would be appropriate for the individual to wear a close-fitting amulet or bracelet.

d. Where a member of a unit or ships company wishes to possess a weapon for religious or belief reasons, a request to do so must be made to Command. When Command is assessing a request, it is important to note that the Royal Navy distinguishes between the tenets of devout faith, which shall be allowed where operationally practicable, and the cultural and social customs of a particular group, which may be accommodated where disciplinary prudence permits.

e. When considering a request to hold a weapon for religious or belief reasons, it is also important to note, in accordance with Para 3818 that ‘any faith or practice must be clearly established by an individual and not simply deemed as having been undertaken in order to defy the regulations contained within this BR’.

f. When Command is processing a request to hold a weapon for reasons of religion or belief, a distinction should be made between carrying/wearing a weapon on a daily basis (such as the Sikh *Kirpan*), and weapons possessed for ceremonial reasons, to be used in a ritual. Within certain forms of Pagan Religion, the adherent is expected to possess a knife for ritual purposes. However, this does not require the adherent to carry the knife at all times.

g. If Command grant a request from a member of a unit or ships company to hold a weapon for reasons of religion and belief, then that weapon must be declared to the RNP and the EWO. In addition, the individual must also be able to demonstrate the ability to store the weapon securely.

h. Command may grant the request in principle to carry a weapon, but place constraints upon the size of blade allowed.

i. Any Service Person wishing to possess a weapon for reasons of religion or belief must familiarise themselves with local laws. The laws limiting the size of blade, and freedom to carry a weapon can differ between countries, including those which collectively constitute the UK.

3117. Religious and Belief-Based Dietary Needs

a. People of many faiths and belief systems observe special diets. The Armed Forces make every effort to cater for such dietary requirements.

b. **Mess Halls.** Vegan, vegetarian, Halal and Kosher meals can be provided in Service mess facilities. It should be noted that the preparation of kosher food by mess staff in strict observance of the Jewish faith cannot be guaranteed. This also applies to the preparation of Halal food with regard to the Muslim faith. Sikh Service Personnel require an alternative meat selection to the Halal or Kosher option.

c. **Ration Packs.** Halal, Kosher, vegan, and vegetarian ration packs can normally be made available for operations and exercises[7]. However, in some circumstances this cannot be guaranteed.

3118. Religious Fasting

Some religions require their followers to undergo extended periods of fasting. In accordance with a wider MOD approach religious fasting should normally be allowed in the Royal Navy. However, fasting might be judged inappropriate in some operational circumstances and should be risk-assessed; for example, when the physical demands on an individual are high, and fasting would be hazardous. Most religions provide adherents with a waiver or limitation of fasting obligations in situations of conflict, travel or sickness. Care should be taken to ensure that permitting an individual to undertake a fast does not place unreasonable burdens on other personnel.

3119. Conscientious Objection

Armed Forces personnel have a liability to deploy with their units worldwide. There are well established appeal procedures for Service Personnel who, during their service, develop a genuine conscientious objection to further military service. A member of the Armed Forces who develops an objection to future military service should make that objection known to their Commanding Officer. Details of the procedure to be followed can be found at Para 5408.

[7] Sikhs require an alternative meat selection to the Halal or Kosher options.

SECTION 3

NAVAL CHAPLAINCY SERVICE: POLICY, STRUCTURE AND ENABLERS

3120. Naval Chaplaincy Service Policy

a. The Naval Chaplaincy Service exists to support the religion and belief needs of all personnel within the Royal Navy. Naval Chaplains are religious ministers and clerics who are commissioned by His Majesty the King. Before joining the Armed Forces, they have been professionally trained by their own Endorsing Authorities, and have accrued years of post-qualifying experience in their respective religious fields prior to applying to the Royal Navy. Successful New Entry chaplains then receive naval training at Britannia Royal Naval College, induction at the Armed Forces Chaplaincy Centre and further chaplaincy-specific operational training before being required to pass a Fleet Board confirming they can join the Trained Strength.

b. Naval chaplains bear no rank whatsoever but ‘are commissioned as such, and are not officers. Although subject to Service law, a Naval chaplain has no rank, and is therefore outranked by no-one. Conversely a Naval chaplain outranks no-one.’ They are expected to conduct themselves in a manner which reflects their calling and position. They must maintain the highest standards of professionalism, religious and moral leadership and personal functional standards at all times. .

c. Naval chaplains deliver a generic ‘all souls’ ministry serving personnel regardless of their religion or belief. They have pastoral, spiritual and ethical responsibilities to Command, Service Personnel and their dependents. In addition, chaplains help support team cohesion and defence engagement activities.

(1) As pastoral carers, chaplains are traditionally referred to as the ‘friend and adviser’ to all on board. In this pastoral capacity, they deliver confidential, non-judgemental, non-directive and non-religious support, working with other agencies, both at sea and ashore, in peace and war, to enhance the readiness, resilience and resourcefulness of Service people and their families.

(2) As religious professionals, chaplains provide spiritual leadership through acts of worship, religious teaching and spiritual support.

(3) Chaplains support unit cohesion, by forming strong relationships with unit members, and engaging with individuals and collective elements as required. Chaplains monitor morale, mediate disputes, and facilitate communication between ranks and departments to maximise unit effectiveness.

(4) Chaplains support Defence Engagement activities at a local, national and international level, through engagement with charities and other religious and faith organisations.

(5) As ethical advisers, chaplains function as guardians of the Service’s moral compass, including its ethical values, standards and ethos.

d. Through the delivery of these five outputs, chaplains offer an invaluable and unique service to the Royal Navy and the Armed Forces. Collectively, chaplains act as a vital force-multiplier, improving the performance and resilience of individuals, units and the Royal Navy.

3121. Confidentiality

a. The Royal Navy recognises that professional confidentiality is an integral component of the pastoral care that chaplains offer to naval personnel. This confidential support sustains the privacy and wellbeing of the individual, thereby enhancing the individual's contribution to the Royal Navy.

b. For Roman Catholic and Anglican chaplains, in accordance with ecclesiastical canon law, confidentiality in formal sacramental confession is inviolable entailing no reporting whatsoever to a third party.

c. Pastoral encounters between chaplains and naval personnel remain strictly confidential. However, exceptionally, there may be occasions when a chaplain needs to share sensitive information with appropriate authorities, without the consent of the service person, "if there is reasonable concern that a child or adult at risk has been abused, or may be at risk of harm, where sharing information without the person's consent will override the requirement to keep information confidential"[8]. In this situation, the chaplain should first encourage the person to disclose the information themselves. If the chaplain feels obliged to share pertinent information against the person's wishes, then the chaplain must inform the person of their intentions, of what is to be reported, and to whom the report will be made, unless by doing so they are likely to put them or others at greater harm.

d. The law on confidentiality, and any definition of what constitutes good practice, is complex. Where chaplains are unclear, they are to refer to the Tri-Service protocols, their respective Principal Denominational Chaplain or Endorsing Authority and should seek guidance from the Chaplain of the Fleet's office.

3122. World Faiths Representation

a. Since 2022, uniformed chaplains endorsed by other World Faith organisations are able to serve as chaplains in the Royal Navy as regulars and reservists to deliver pastoral care and a generic chaplaincy ministry to 'all souls' in accordance with chaplaincy policy as described in para 3124.

b. World Faiths chaplaincy has also been provided by full-time civilian World Faiths' Chaplains drawn from the Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh faiths. These chaplains advise on matters specific to those faith groups, provide internal advice to the MOD, and raise awareness of their faith traditions across the Armed Forces. They are administered through the Armed Forces Chaplaincy Centre at the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom but can be contacted through any military chaplain. Names, addresses and contact details of these chaplains may be obtained from the chaplaincy contact list.

[8] Church of Scotland Safeguarding Handbook, p43.

c. Questions regarding religious practice or religious festivals for adherents of the Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh faith communities should be addressed to the appropriate World Faith Chaplain. Other faith and belief issues may be referred to the D&I team at NCHQ, the Chaplain of the Fleet's office, or the relevant Defence network.

d. With the consent of the individual, chaplains may forward details of Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic and Jewish personnel in their ships/units to the appropriate World Faith Chaplain.

3123. Endorsing Authorities

Prior to selection for service all chaplaincy applicants must have their application supported by an MOD-approved Endorsing Authority. In addition to the normal responsibilities of the chain of command these Endorsing Authorities retain their own inherent disciplinary and pastoral responsibilities for the chaplain throughout the chaplain's time serving with a Chaplains' Commission in the Armed Forces. Any organisation wishing to become an Endorsing Authority may apply via the MOD's Chief of Defence People. Further information is available from the Chaplain of the Fleet's Office.

3124. Naval Chaplaincy Service Headquarters (NCS HQ)

a. The Naval Chaplaincy Service (NCS) is led and managed by the Chaplain of the Fleet (COTF) who is responsible to the First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff (1SL/CNS) for the provision of a Chaplaincy Service. The COTF is responsible for enhancing the moral component of operational capability by ensuring that the pastoral and religious, spiritual, ethical and belief needs of all Service Personnel are supported, through the delivery of sufficient, capable and motivated chaplains and generic chaplaincy provision.

b. The COTF is line-managed by the Fleet Commander as the Operational Head of the RN. The COTF is also a member of the Armed Forces Chaplaincy Policy Board (AFCPB), together with the Army and RAF Heads of Chaplaincy Services (HoCs). The AFCPB provides a forum for decision making across the three Armed Forces' Chaplaincy Services. The COTF is part of Navy Command Headquarters (NCHQ) and routinely engages at the 2* level. The COTF is therefore afforded 2* status for official entitlement purposes.

c. The Deputy Chaplain of the Fleet (DCOTF) is responsible for the delivery and operational capability of the NCS and is assisted by Staff Chaplains, responsible for operations, policy, recruiting, Commando Forces, Maritime Reserves and Sea Cadets.

d. The three major denominational groupings (Anglican, Roman Catholic and Church of Scotland and Free Churches) are each headed by a Principal Denominational Chaplain (PDC) appointed by their Endorsing Authority. They are responsible for pastoral support, ecclesiastical direction and guidance, and ecclesiastical discipline.

e. The career management of chaplains is undertaken on behalf of DCOTF by the COTF's Executive Assistant (EA).

f. The COTF is assisted in their policy making duties by the Naval Chaplaincy Policy Board. The purpose is to ensure the delivery of good practice, policy coherence and ongoing relevance. Chaired by COTF, it consists of DCOTF, AFCC Principal, EA COTF, Principal Denominational Chaplains (PDC), and the Staff Chaplain (secretary).

3125. Chaplaincy Teams

Where an establishment has more than one chaplain assigned the DCOTF will appoint a Chaplaincy Team Leader (CTL) to coordinate the delivery of chaplaincy to the Unit(s) or Establishment. Within a Naval Base these teams include those appointed to the unit, and those appointed to a flotilla. The flotilla chaplains' operational deployments will be subject to their 1RO in agreement with the coordinating flotilla chaplain reporting to the 1*/OF5 Chain of Command. When not at sea or on leave flotilla chaplains are to make themselves available to the CTL for duty.

3126. Facilitating the Work of the Chaplain

a. Chaplains in the Royal Navy represent a unique resource that can assist by taking a considerable load from busy Divisional Officers and Troop Commanders. In this way, chaplains can enhance the depth of care the Service offers to personnel. In order to make best use of this resource, chaplains themselves need appropriate support. In particular, they need adequate accommodation and ready access to personnel. A chaplain, who is welcomed and encouraged to become fully involved in the life of a unit or establishment will be a positive asset, whose benefit far outweighs any inconvenience caused by the need to accommodate another person in a crowded ship or unit.

b. While a chaplain works with and alongside the Executive Officer and the department, they do have a separate identity and therefore are accorded Head of Department status and direct access to Commanding Officer. Traditionally, chaplains assume the rank of the individual to whom they are talking and in a gathering of mixed ranks it has been customary to accord them the rank of the highest Serving Person present.

c. There is a relationship between the accommodation available in a ship, the chaplain's place in a ship and the length of time which a chaplain can spend in a frigate or destroyer. Guidelines as to what is appropriate are as follows:

(1) Temporary sleeping arrangement and no dedicated working space - up to two weeks.

(2) Shared cabin but no dedicated working space - up to eight weeks.

(3) Shared accommodation and dedicated workspace - up to 12 weeks.

(4) Single cabin and computer terminal - up to 36 weeks.

3127. Retreats

Commissioned chaplains should attend an annual retreat for which UK travel and any subsistence and retreat costs should be met from public funds. Without prior approval the Crown is not liable to retrospectively fund a retreat. Further details are available in BRd 439. Units are to ensure this is accounted for in their budgeting. If a retreat is taken outside the UK this must be approved both by the DCOTF and the appropriate higher command. Financial probity should be exercised in accordance with JSP 752 Art 04.0101.

3128. Church Officers

a. Church Officers are Serving Personnel on platforms who are entrusted to facilitate acts of worship when there is no chaplain embarked. They may be of any rank, rate or denomination, but are to have a suitable demeanour and sufficient organisational skills for the task. Church Officers are appointed by Commanding Officers. When the position of Church Officer is vacant, every effort should be made to ensure that a suitable person is proposed as Church Officer in preference to an individual being pressed into the post.

b. **Tasks.** Church Officers should co-ordinate arrangements for the provision of weekly services and other religious gatherings at sea. When alongside for a port visit, they should publish the times of local church services. When a chaplain is embarked, they have an invaluable role to play in helping to facilitate worship as directed by the chaplain.

c. **Training and Support.** The NCS produce a comprehensive guide for Church Officers in electronic and hard copy formats. In addition, the naval base chaplaincy should hold induction training sessions for Church Officers and additional support and advice is available from NCS HQ and the flotilla coordinating chaplain. Command should make Church Officers available for this training wherever possible.

3129. Services at Sea

a. The provision of weekly worship is the responsibility of the ship's Commanding Officer. When a chaplain is embarked, the content of the service is the chaplain's responsibility. If no chaplain is embarked, the CO may delegate that responsibility to a designated Church Officer.

b. NCS Policy is that the main church service at sea is open to all and should normally be ecumenical in nature, with provision for celebration of Holy Communion made at a separate time.

3130. Services When Abroad

a. A service is not normally held on board when the ship is alongside for a port visit. However, this is at the discretion of the chaplain and the CO. If no service is held on board, a list of local churches and places of faith or belief, along with addresses and service times should be made available by the Visit Officer.

b. If a port has a naval presence and a Naval Chaplaincy, it is appropriate for the Ship's chaplain to call on the local chaplain during a port visit. If there is no chaplaincy presence, then it is appropriate for the chaplain to call on the local ecclesiastical hierarchy.

3131. Ecumenical Services

On many occasions it is more appropriate for a chaplain to conduct an ecumenical church service rather than be bound by their own denominational tradition. Traditional occasions on which ecumenical services are held include Remembrance Sunday, Seafarers' Sunday, ship commissioning and re-dedication services, and services during which colours are re-dedicated. Guidelines for conducting ecumenical services may be found in BRd 439.

3132. Commissioning, Re-Dedication and De-Commissioning Services

a. The COTF will normally conduct all commissioning services, regardless of the size of the ship, submarine or unit. Traditionally, DCOTF officiates at re-dedication services and decommissioning Services are conducted by the last chaplain of the ship, submarine or unit being decommissioned. The chaplain with direct responsibility for the ship, submarine or unit concerned, will normally be robed and participate in all services associated with their ship.

b. No commissioning, re-dedication or decommissioning should occur without the prior knowledge of COTF. The Commanding Officer is responsible for informing COTF and DCOTF in a timely manner.

c. Services of commissioning, re-dedication and decommissioning are the responsibility of the Commanding Officer. However, the ship or unit's chaplain should be consulted with regard to the order of service. Previous orders of service are available from the COTF's office.

3133. Naval Baptisms Onboard Ships

a. There is a long-standing tradition of Service Personnel having their children baptised on-board ships using the ship's bell as a baptismal font in order to contain the holy water necessary for the rite of Christian baptism.

b. No baptism should be arranged on board without prior consultation with the Commanding Officer, the Unit's chaplain and the appropriate Principal Denominational Chaplain. If a civilian Minister or Priest is invited to conduct a baptism on board, approval must also be obtained from the COTF's office.

c. Details of the baptism are to be recorded in the Ship's Log as well as recorded according to individual church norms, for example in the naval base ships' baptism register. It has been customary in the past for the names of those baptised using the ship's bell to have their names engraved inside the rim of the ship's bell. No public funding is available for this. The COTF's office can advise further on appropriate contractors who can do this.

d. Non-religious naming ceremonies may also take place at an establishment or on board with the agreement of the Commanding Officer.

3134. Marriages and Civil Partnerships

a. **RN Marriages and Civil Partnerships in the United Kingdom.** Service marriages and civil partnerships within the UK should be conducted in accordance with the regulations of the appropriate civic authorities and with due regard to the traditions, customs and regulations pertaining to the officiating celebrant. The Naval Chaplaincy Service welcomes applications from all couples who wish to have a civil partnership or to get married. Non-religious ceremonies are also available. Some Endorsing Authorities do not allow their chaplains to conduct same-sex ceremonies however the NCS can arrange alternative provision. Due to certain legal preliminaries longer lead in times may be required for some procedures within military establishments. Queries should be directed either to the Unit chaplain or to COTF's office.

b. **Marriages in Churches and other Locations.** Church marriages and civil partnerships should be conducted in accordance with ecclesiastical rules, customs and legislation. These differ between the different Endorsing Authorities. For example, some churches only allow marriages to be conducted within a church and by a chaplain authorised specifically to solemnise marriages, while other churches allow their clergy to conduct marriages in other locations including outdoor locations. Further advice is available in from the COTF's office.

c. **Marriages Abroad.** Chaplains should give every support to couples intending to marry abroad. In the case of a civil ceremony, in order to overcome any procedural difficulties, the High Commission or Embassy of the country concerned should be consulted well in advance. In the case of a church marriage, the local ecclesiastical authorities must be consulted to ensure that there is no breach of canon law or courtesy. A check must be made to ascertain whether a marriage abroad should be registered locally.

d. **Marriage in HM Ships.** Royal Navy vessels, including Royal Fleet Auxiliaries, are not registered places for marriages, for either civil or religious ceremonies, even abroad. Preliminaries for marriage may be carried out on board if the regulations are satisfied (QRRN Chapter 61). Marriage Banns may only be called by an Anglican chaplain or the Commanding Officer.

3135. Death in Service, Bereavement Care and Funeral Officers

When a death in Service occurs, the Visiting and/or Assisting Officers who provide assistance to families should take account of religion or belief of the bereaved and their family members. Nonetheless a Service chaplain should be offered to provide bereavement support and pastoral care. In most cases, the religion or belief of the deceased will directly influence the funeral, burial or cremation arrangements. Advice is available from COTF's office, local chaplains and other faith and belief groups. Funeral Officers should take care not to try to organise the details of the service or ceremony inside a crematorium, church or at the burial ground, but leave this to the chaplain or appropriate celebrant. Funeral Officers should liaise with the relevant chaplain or celebrant as early as possible and ensure the officiant has the opportunity to provide pastoral care and bereavement support as well as deliver the ceremonial rites provided for within the funeral.

3136. Death During Combat and Emergency Burial

In circumstances where a Death in Service occurs in combat or while deployed, bodies of the deceased will normally be repatriated to the UK. In an extreme combat situation, repatriation may not be possible. In this situation, a chaplain is permitted to bury the deceased. Chaplains on front line duty carry an emergency order of prayers for the five main minority faith groups (Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism) to enable this. If a religious ceremony is not appropriate a non-religious ritual may be provided as an alternative.

3137. Memorial Services for Individuals and Ships

a. In the event of the death of a member of a Ship's Company it is appropriate for a memorial service to be held for those on board who are unable to attend the funeral. This should be conducted in liaison with the ship's chaplain. The service may be held on board or, if alongside, at a local Naval Base church. If the service is held at a local Naval Base church then the service should be arranged in conjunction with the establishment's chaplaincy. An alternative non-religious provision should be available for those who opt for it. The local base chaplaincy should be contacted for advice.

b. It is appropriate for a chaplain to conduct a wreath-laying service at sea when a ship passes the site where a Royal Navy ship sank. Alternatively, a chaplain may conduct a memorial service at a War Graves Cemetery ashore. QRRN details the occasions when the cost of a wreath may be borne by public funds. Units may obtain wreaths from a local branch of RBL. Ships should ensure that they have sufficient poppy wreaths for an entire deployment and that the appropriate fund is used. Biodegradable wreaths should be used to avoid MARPOL incidents.

3138. Veterans' Funerals

a. When providing support to funerals, chaplaincy policy distinguishes between a death in service and veteran funerals. The MOD provides for clergy, chaplains or non-religious celebrants to conduct the funerals of any serving person's family who request this support, paid for by the Crown. However, NCS policy is that commissioned chaplains who are currently serving are not available to conduct veteran's funerals. This policy reflects the fact that chaplaincy's primary purpose is supporting those currently serving and their families.

b. Traditionally, veteran's funerals have been conducted by retired chaplains or local celebrants via the appointed Funeral Directors. Retired naval chaplains may be contacted through the Association of Royal Naval Chaplains or the COTF's office. The customary exceptions to this rule are if the veteran is of Flag rank, or if the veteran was a regular member of a naval church congregation or for some other significant pastoral reason, for example if the deceased had only recently left the Service. Requests for chaplaincy support for veteran funerals should be made to the COTF's office.

3139. Burial at Sea and Committal of Ashes at Sea

a. The Royal Navy offers the facility for the Committal of Ashes at sea. Committal of Ashes at sea is provided to any former Serving Person and their spouse at public expense. The local Naval Base chaplaincy team is normally responsible and a range of faith and belief options are available. Further information is available from the Chaplaincy Committals Officer at HM Naval Base Portsmouth.

b. Ashes may be committed from warships on certain occasions, but this will normally only be approved in the case of persons serving at time of death.

c. For practical reasons, ashes must not be literally scattered at sea. The ashes should be stored in a weighted, vented and unmarked container/casket. Suitable biodegradable containers are available. The Chaplaincy Committals Officer at HM Naval Base Portsmouth or appropriate chaplaincy will be able to provide current regulations regarding the specification of caskets that are permissible. The casket is to be treated as a coffin and is to be covered by a small Union Flag. The White Ensign is not to be used.

d. During peacetime the burial of a body at sea is not normally permitted. No commitment should be entered into with next-of-kin for burial at sea without consulting COTF's office.