

Dear Member,

Newsletter No. 11 includes summaries of the talks given at the one-day programme of the SIG at the Royal College of Psychiatrists on 31st January, 'Invited or not, God is here – Spiritual Aspects of the Therapeutic Encounter'. We are indebted to the speakers, Dr. Cherrie Coghlan, the Rev. Chris MacKenna and Professor Chris Cook for their contributions and permission to include these texts for the benefit of those who cannot attend meetings.

Three documents are included in this Newsletter, which reflect an increasing concern with health and spirituality. The first is a draft document on NHS CHAPLAINCY: MEETING THE RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL NEEDS OF PATIENTS AND STAFF, the product of collaboration between the Department of Health and the Multi-Faith Joint National Consultation Working Party representing the main world faith communities and NHS Chaplaincy organisations. It highlights the most appropriate ways in which Trusts need to respond to the changing and developing multi-cultural life of the nation, as reflected in their patient and staff composition, and updates previous guidance on chaplaincy in line with current best practice.

Second is SPIRITUAL CARE IN NHSSCOTLAND. The Scottish Executive Health Department has issued guidance requesting that spiritual care policies be developed by the NHS to ensure that responsive and sensitive services are available for patients, relatives and carers. An introduction to the context and background of this outstanding initiative has been kindly supplied by Laura Ross, of the Scottish Executive Health Planning and Quality Division.

Third is the National Institute of Mental Health in England project draft proposal RECOGNISING THE IMPORTANCE OF SPIRITUALITY IN A WHOLE PERSON APPROACH TO MENTAL HEALTH, which aims to collate current thinking on the importance of spirituality in mental health on an individual and group basis, to evaluate the role of faith communities in the field of mental health and to develop and promote good practice in whole persons approaches. We are obliged to Peter Gilbert N.I.M.H.E./S.C.I.E. Fellow in Social Care Mental Health, for drawing our attention to this pioneering government initiative, with which he has been closely involved.

No less important are the personal experiences of service users. The article by Hilary Pegg describes most poignantly the need for a spiritual understanding of illness and how deeply alienating it can be when this understanding is not offered. We are grateful to her for offering this account of her personal experience.

With all good wishes,
Dr. Andrew Powell (chair)