

in the spotlight... Chaplaincy



You may have seen David Butterworth's friendly face around the business but in this article he tells us more about his role as Chaplain for the NEC Group.

Q. Tell us about your role and how you work within the different parts of the business...

My role is a real privilege to hold. And its quite unique in the Events world. I often say, 'its Monday then its Monday! The week flies by with the diversity of the job, the business and our diverse events as it were. (and the things I do outside the NEC Group). I'm sometimes on campus or available in the early morning or late at night and/or weekend. This enables me to spread myself through the various shift patterns. Clearly, I can't and shouldn't be everywhere, so I've developed relationships with wider Faith representatives from a number of Faith traditions and of course inclusively, with gender and ethnicity balance too. I can now happily report that I have a team of trusted Chaplaincy Volunteers who also love the NEC Group staff teams. I attend

various staff meetings so that our wider Team NEC know that I'm around and available for everyone. Its also thrilling to support our business partners and ever increasing campus activities. In particular, its great to be welcomed at Brilliance, Town Hall, Business Breakfasts and thank goodness, only to be a spectator at 'Its a Knock-Out' and Sports day! I love welcoming new starters within the NEC Group monthly Staff Induction sessions and then even encouraging the Annual NEC Pensioners Christmas Lunch!

Q. What does an average day look like for you?

That depends where I park! Sometimes walking-in or getting on the bus from the East or Arena Birmingham car park, a conversation can start about a fun thing or a tragic family concern. If I drive through the NEC security barrier, I am always so proud to see our Security Teams

being so welcoming - even when visitors are not so kind to them. Sometimes a Security staff member or someone on the busses, might just say, '*What do you suggest I do? Or 'have you got a minute...?'* Everyday at the NEC I am stopped in the Piazza and often new Visitors to the NEC campus ask me, '*Where's the NECK? I'm lost!*' We often end up smiling with each other as they relax when I say, '*this is the NEC! N.E.C. is short for the National Exhibition Centre...'*. Then they say '*What do you do?'* or '*We had Chaplains in the Army or the hospice or at school - and they were invaluable.* Invariably every day, I hear loads of Visitors saying, '*Wow! they've got Chaplaincy*

here', as they walk past to Resorts World or VOX. or queue for Hall 2. In the ICC, Visitors might be totally lost and need reassurance or they work locally and know we can quietly help them with our Prayer/Quiet Room. Many days we have Chaplaincy Volunteers support us from different Faith traditions, and staff are frequently pleased to observe that we are diverse and inclusive. I think its so important. Don't hesitate to say hi...

Q. What have been the stand-out moments whilst in your role?

Meeting Staff and Visitors is always a stand-out moment - I really mean that - as I and our team focus 100% attention on each individual. But when



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in the spotlight...

I arrived in my role, the Prayer Rooms looked closed most of the day and appeared to have restricted entry. After listening to members of Team NEC and Visitors I could see that we needed a wider interfaith approach. with an inclusive awareness with a generous invitation for everyone. I was personally delighted with that outcome. Therefore, I simply left the door open when on campus and encouraged Prayer Room users to leave the door open when they left... so we looked 'open for business' - and we sourced pop-up banners with our contact details! We then followed the strategy thru by suggesting we offered 'Pop-Up' Prayer/Quiet Rooms in other locations of the business. These soon became well used in the Atrium and other places. It was really a stand-out moment when several of our NEC Group clients like PCWorld and Carphone Warehouse and others said, 'We would like a Prayer/Quiet Room in our 3 day event. Can you help?'. When we met up with the SkillsShow they saw that the Piazza Prayer Room overflowed with their Visitors, and so in the recent SkillsShows they have asked for more Prayer/Quiet Rooms in the Atrium. At the ICC, our client, the NASUWT, always asked for support with Spiritual Space and Worship - they said some of their Attendees would not come unless Chaplaincy helped. The BSAVA team also asked us to be around and lead faith-breakfast meetings, and our long-standing client

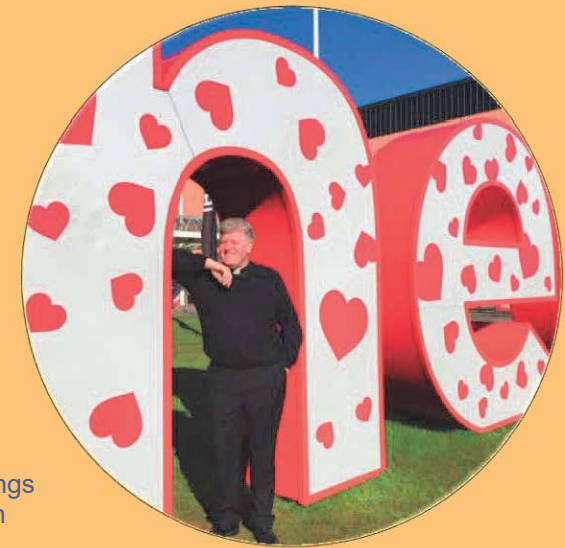
in Rotary always invites me to be there when they hold their Civic Lord Mayors Breakfast too. (I still pay for the breakfast...). I speak at many external events and was invited to be key-note speaker at the University of Law, based in Birmingham, when they considered starting a Chaplaincy. I addressed 70 staff who lectured to hundreds of budding legal practitioners. Their conclusion was - they only wanted Chaplaincy on the good platform the NEC Group does! Interfaith Chaplaincy.

Q: Are there any challenging aspects to your job?

I'm fortunate that I see most things as opportunities. But naturally, when someone is heartbroken and they come into Chaplaincy looking distraught and uncertain - that can weigh heavy. But that's why I'm here - to help people, when they need help the most! Sometimes staff members either come into Chaplaincy or stop me discreetly as I travel around the business, frequently starting the conversation by saying, 'I'm not religious... but my team have said, they are not quite sure what Chaplaincy does, but they think I need to visit the Chaplain!' Sometimes that conversation dives straight into floods of tears, which is perfectly okay. Sometimes it flows into smiles about a happy time around weddings, or new birth or job moves. Sometimes passing Visitors might say, 'what the is a Vicar doing here!' (honestly). I take that as an opportunity to say hi, and have a conversation. We

normally end up sharing amazing things and warm handshakes whatever faith position!

Q. If somebody wants to get in touch, how is it best to do that? Our Interfaith Chaplaincy number is on our Pop-up banners, on the NEC Groupintranet, email sign-off, Yammer and our wonderful HR and Wellbeing Consultants hold the numbers too. Any staff member or business partner can call me on 0121 767 2911 or email david.butterworth@necgroup.co.uk and both follow me around if I'm not in the office. I will always call you back or contact you if I'm tied up. (make sure you leave your name and number with your voice or email and or with our Chaplaincy / Faith Volunteers).



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