

## Impact case study (REF3)

<b>Institution:</b> Staffordshire University		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 20 Social Work and Social Policy		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Enhancing social care for older people using the resources of faith-based communities		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> January 2009 - December 2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name:</b> Peter Kevern	<b>Role:</b> Professor of Values in Health and Social Care	<b>Period employed by HEI:</b> 2010-present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> January 2014- December 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Research at Staffordshire University has demonstrated faith communities can play a valuable role in addressing the social needs of a growing older population in the UK and globally, and has helped to configure them for this role through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Improved dementia awareness</b> amongst 104,400 people, regular worshippers in five dioceses in the Church of England and the Anglican Church in Wales.</li> <li>• <b>More dementia-friendly attitudes and support</b> in 94 churches in the Anglican Diocese of Lichfield, benefitting an estimated 16,100 people.</li> <li>• <b>Increased/strengthened social networks</b> among 3,900 people, 'Dementia Friends' in Lichfield Diocese.</li> <li>• <b>Changes in policy and awareness</b> in the Catholic Church, with the adoption by the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales of a policy commitment to enhance elderly care provision for 4,100,000 members of the Roman Catholic Church under their care.</li> <li>• <b>Improved understanding and planning for death, dying, and funerals</b> in an estimated 2,650 parishes as well as in a range of other settings.</li> </ul>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>With an ageing population, the social care of older people in nations of the industrialised world is likely to be increasingly reliant on informal, voluntary, and family carers working for little or no financial reward. Faith-based communities are one major source of human and material resources to address this challenge, as they tend to serve as centres for social organisation and voluntary activity. In addition, they typically have ideological and ethical commitments to the most vulnerable.</p> <p>Since 2009, Professor Peter Kevern has led a programme of research bringing the beliefs and practices of faith-based communities into critical dialogue with current thinking on the social needs of older people and the policy options for addressing them. The overall aim is to enable the involvement of faith-based communities in social care; to provide the wider academic community with further insights into the role of religion in its provision; and to contribute to an evidence base for future policymaking and commissioning.</p> <p><b>The first major strand (2010-present)</b> of the underpinning research is theological and philosophical. It is addressed primarily to leaders of faith-based communities to provide a conceptual and imaginative framework for their engagement with older peoples' social care [3.1, 3.6]. This research establishes elderly social care as integral to and arising from the core beliefs of the community, challenging the marginalisation of older people in some major faith communities by a rigorous reading of their core beliefs and authoritative texts. A distinctive contribution has been to formulate an authoritative Catholic theology of old age that provides the conceptual legitimation for the enormous involvement of Catholic organisations in elderly care worldwide [3.1]. It has contributed to a new emphasis on the needs of older people within official Catholic discourse and some new policy initiatives (see 4.2 below).</p> <p><b>The second strand of the research (2012-present)</b>, building on these findings, combines theoretical studies in religion and ageing with the outcomes of Kevern's empirical research to develop new insights into how religion and belief may influence practical aspects of ageing and care [3.2, 3.3]. Key findings are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That the interface between religion and social care is more complex than it appears in</li> </ul>		

either the official rhetoric of religious groups or the assumptions of policymakers.

- That an active, creative process of making existential meaning may be informing the experience of social care regardless of whether it is badged as 'religion'.
- And that standard definitions of 'spirituality' betray the poverty of conventional constructions of personhood, with implications for the care of people with dementia.

The importance of this research lies in how it identifies the role of personal 'spirituality' and religious commitments in the care of older people (especially those with dementia). In this way it informs best practice in social care and supports the practical contribution of faith-based organisations, which constitutes the third strand of this body of research.

**The third strand (2013-present)** is the analysis and collation of empirical evidence of the potential role of faith-based communities to inform policymaking and resource deployment both within these communities and in the planning of social care provision [3.3, 3.4, 3.5]. Insights from both quantitative and qualitative evidence demonstrate the ways in which faith-based community approaches challenge and form attitudes towards ageing and motivate action to mitigate the effect of shortfalls in care. These include:

- Changes to the knowledge and awareness of dementia in Christian congregations following a structured intervention [3.4].
- The continued significance of quasi-religious categories in the response of carers of people with dementia to their experience [3.3].
- The outcomes of a pilot study of a church-based 'Conversations about death, dying and funerals' intervention [3.5].
- The role of a church-based voluntary movement in the care of older people in Brazil, before and during the Covid-19 pandemic [3.7].

### 3. References to the research

**3.1** Kevern, P (2020) 'It's beautiful to be old.' *In search of emergent Catholic Social Teaching on Old Age* *New Blackfriars* 101 (1093) 266-285. <http://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/4912> Peer-reviewed. The first account of Catholic teaching on old age and its implications for Church policy, using an original methodology. Westwood, S. (Ed.). (2019). *Ageing, Diversity and Equality: Social Justice Perspectives* (Open Access). London: Routledge.

**3.2** Kevern, P (2018) Chapter 14 on 'Religion, Ageing and Equality' for Westwood, S (ed) *Ageing, Diversity and Equality: social justice perspectives* (Open Access) London: Routledge. <http://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/4303> Reviewed by editor.

**3.3** Kevern, P and Stifoss-Hanssen, H (2019) The Challenges of Dementia and the (un)making of meaning: analysis of an online forum on carer spirituality *Dementia* 19(4) 1220-1236 (Q1, H40). <http://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/5241> Peer-reviewed. A unique textual analysis of an online forum identifying post-religious themes in the discourse of carers of people with dementia.

**3.4** Kevern, P and Primrose, D (2020) 'Changes in Measures of Dementia Awareness in UK Church Congregations Following a 'Dementia Friendly' Intervention: A Pre-Post Cohort Study'. *Religions* (Q1) <https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/11/7/337> <http://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/6400> Peer-reviewed. The only attempt so far to quantify the effects of dementia training in religious communities.

**3.5** Kevern, P and Sanders, J (2015) 'Death-confident congregations'? Lessons from the GraveTalk Pilot. *New Writing in Health and Social Care* 1:2, 21-30. <http://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/2145> Peer-reviewed.

**3.6** Kevern, P (2010) Sharing the mind of Christ: preliminary thoughts on dementia and the cross *New Blackfriars* 91(1034) 408-22 <http://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/58> Peer-reviewed. A ground-breaking paper subjecting central Christian doctrines to constructive scrutiny in the light of the historical experience of dementia (4<sup>th</sup> most cited paper in the journal's history).

**3.7** Kevern, P., Lopes, R.G.D.C., Barroso, Á.E., Côrte, B. and Lucena, C. (2020). The Contribution of Church-Based Networks to Social Care in the Coronavirus Pandemic and Beyond: The Case of Pastoral da Pessoa Idosa in Brazil. *Religions*, (Q1). <https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/11/10/486/pdf> <http://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/6545> Peer-reviewed.

Evaluating a massive, unresearched social movement.

Total Funding: GBP129,091, 7 grants from various organisations. Including: Age Concern Birmingham, 09/2015-06/2016, GBP31,791, Death Matters, Esmee Fairbairn Trust. PI Peter Kevern, 06/2018-10/2020, GBP14,000 Embrace Project, Catholic Social Action Network.

#### 4. Details of the impact

The research has had impact in three key areas:

##### 4.1 Making Churches more Dementia Friendly

The Dementia Friendly Church project (2012-present, with reported impacts occurring from 2015) grew out of Kevern's research as a result of a collaboration with the Anglican Diocese of Lichfield. *'There was an understanding that dementia needed to be discussed within the church, but not necessarily how it should be discussed, and by working with Dr Peter Kevern it has helped to develop a process by which this could happen'* [5.1]. It was developed to inform, inspire, and embed change in church communities so that their resources can contribute to the wellbeing of people with dementia and their carers. The project was directed at church attendees through volunteer 'champions' in each church. The intention was to make churches 'friendly spaces' for people living with dementia and their carers, and to provide them with the tools and encouragement to lead beneficial change in their local communities. The programme continues to grow and develop, facilitated by the work of 3 part-time jobs of 'Dementia Enablers' (one appointed in 2015, the other two by the end of 2016) (headcount:3; FTE 1.5) [5.2 p.1]. The significance of the impact was demonstrated first in the Diocese of Lichfield. Subsequently, the reach extended to national policy, with the research leading directly to Kevern's membership of the Civil Society and Voluntary Sector Sub-Group, Prime Minister's Challenge on Dementia consultative process during 2014. The Lead Bishop for the Church of England on Health and Social Care described the Dementia Friendly Church initiative and toolkit as *'a vital part of our response to what is becoming quite a crisis in our country'* [5.3 0:47].

##### Key measures of impact

**Increased awareness leading to action.** Research conducted in 2017-2019 has demonstrated a measurable change in dementia awareness in the Diocese of Lichfield as a result of the programme [3.4]: 61 people, representatives of 11 church communities, completed the Dementia Awareness Scale before and after an intervention and 'Results showed a robust improvement in scores on both the "Knowledge" and "Comfort" subscales,' [3.4 p.1]. The effect was strongest for items measuring ease and confidence in the presence of people with dementia, giving indirect evidence that the programme leads to more open and welcoming congregations [3.4]. *'One of the big barriers around dementia has been underlying fear, people don't know how to respond, people are anxious. The fact that this programme has enabled people to talk about dementia in church, in the community is itself liberating, and when the conversations begin people are more likely to be able to access the right help at the right time'* [5.3 10:30] Lichfield Diocesan Transforming Church and Communities Enabler.

In addition, Dementia Friendly Church (DFCh) work has increased the visibility of dementia within the Church of England and has influenced the Church's response to the needs of people with dementia and their carers: in 2019 5 videos were produced for the websites of dioceses promoting DFCh, along with a longer version for national distribution, using Impact Acceleration Funding provided by Staffordshire University (awarded GBP 3,416). The longer video [5.3] provides case studies of ways that different churches have adopted and adapted the DFCh project for their own needs: *'A dementia friendly church... has a warmth about it ... It's a church that flexible and willing to adapt to peoples' needs, and... to ensure they are still included in the community.'* [5.3 6:05].

**Developing care capacity in the community.** In the five years to July 2019 Lichfield diocese held 94 dementia services for an estimated 10,000 people (based on average attendance per church). They made around 3,900 people 'dementia friends'. 29 four-session training courses were held in 'building dementia-friendly churches' involving 538 people as participants. Two conferences were organised with representatives from 25 different dioceses [5.2]. The churches represented by 538 people as participants within the diocese [5.2 p.2] are now

engaging in continued 'embedding' activity to ensure they maintain a 'dementia friendly' culture and initiate practical changes to the benefit of people with dementia in the surrounding community. 83 of these churches now have 'Dementia Friendly' certification [5.2 p.1]. Another impact of the Diocese of Lichfield becoming more dementia friendly is that they are becoming *'involved in local partnerships, including playing an active part in local Dementia Action Alliances... as well as building strong connections with other charities, such as the Alzheimer's Society, Age UK and Approach'* [5.2 p.3]. *'The impact of the dementia-friendly program has been totally transformative... The program has helped to raise awareness and improved understanding, which has had a positive impact on people living with and affected by dementia'* [5.1].

**Providing a model of good practice for national and international use.** As a result of the conferences organised, the approach pioneered in Lichfield diocese has been adopted in similar form by dioceses of Chester, St Asaph, Winchester, and Rochester [5.3] and adapted for use in other dioceses across the UK thus extending the reach of the impact to an estimated 104,400 people who are regular church attenders [5.4]. The work of the diocese has also been recognised by the Alzheimer's Society, which in 2019 awarded it Dementia-Friendly Community status. This status in turn authorises the diocese to award Dementia-Friendly Church certificates to participating churches [3.4].

**Driving changes to policy.** The project provided the basis for policy change in the Church of England through a motion passed by the General Synod (the Church governing body) in July 2019 to *'request all dioceses to raise the profile of work with those diagnosed with dementia and their carers'* [5.2 p.1].

#### 4.2 Changing Policy and Practice in the Roman Catholic Church

Kevern's work on the emerging theology of old age in the Catholic Church (2018-present) is a leading contribution to the shaping of Catholic Elderly Social Care [3.1]. His research work with Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN) formed one section (of three) of the CSAN report 'Care in Time' [5.5, pp.25-36] for the Conference of Catholic Bishops of England and Wales in November 2019. In response, the Conference adopted recommendations 3 and 4 from the report as a resolution that committed the Church to increasing coordination, developing provision, and planning for future care [5.5 p.8].

This research also led to Kevern being invited to address the international conference on the Pastoral Care of the Elderly organised by the influential Vatican Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life (hereafter 'Dicastery'), involving about 550 people as attendees from 60 countries (January 2020) [5.6]. His presentation, based on a close reading of Pope Francis' theology of elderly care, reinforced the Pope's closing words to the conference (*'I ask that this does not remain an isolated initiative, but that it instead mark the beginning of a journey of pastoral exploration and discernment. We need to change our pastoral habits to respond to the presence of so many older people in families and communities...'* [5.6]) and so contributed to the practical policy recommendations adopted by the Dicastery, notably the call for each diocese worldwide to have a dedicated office for the care of older people [5.6].

#### Key measures of impact

**Public Policy, Law and Services.** The 2019 CSAN report and follow-up actions have directly contributed to debate in the Catholic Church about ageing policy at a global level through the international Caritas network and the Dicastery. The report arising from the research was submitted to the Council of Bishops of England and Wales to stimulate action in December 2019 [5.5 pp.25-36].

**Social welfare.** Arising from work begun at the Dicastery meeting, Kevern has since March 2020 led a research-based collaboration with Pastoral da Pessoa Idosa, a Brazilian NGO for the support of isolated older people. The NGO involves 25,000 people as volunteers serving approximately 170,000 older people. This collaboration is making recommendations for policy, support, and training of voluntary networks at national and international level to support older people, and especially in response to Covid-19 [3.7, 5.7].

### 4.3 Enhancing Understanding and Planning around Death, Dying and Funerals in Faith Communities

The GraveTalk evaluation project (2013-2015) was undertaken on behalf of the Church of England and provided the basis for a national programme of structured group conversations on death, dying and funerals in the Church of England and beyond. The GraveTalk project was developed for the Archbishop's Council of the Church of England to provide in churches a 'café space to discuss death, dying and funerals' [5.9a p2]. The initiative improves the experience of dying and bereavement by creating the conditions for early, timely discussion of fear of dying; and by promoting timely consideration of financial and funeral arrangements. A team led by Kevern and the Lichfield Diocesan Transforming Church and Communities Enabler was asked to pilot and evaluate the GraveTalk model, and in particular the two innovative features of a café-style encounter within Church and the use of Conversation Cards. Their findings from the pilot research [3.5] shaped the final development of the programme and prepared it for rollout nationally, by making 'some recommendations for changes; and also, indicat(ing) issues which require further deliberation and/or decision' (2015-present) [5.9a p.2]. According to the Head of Life Events for the Archbishops' Council, 'The pilot evaluation report recommendations were used to help revise the program before it was launched nationally in 2015.' and about 25 dioceses have now formally introduced their clergy to the GraveTalk material and process [5.8a]. Our findings on the centrality of hospitality, the importance of 'word of mouth' groups, and the most helpful questions to ask were central to this development [3.5 pp.28-9].

#### Key measures of impact

**Understanding, Learning and Participation.** There is good, if indirect evidence, that the project has contributed to a change of attitudes and behaviour among those connected to church communities. 2,650 facilitator's packs and 3,200 separate packs of conversation cards had been sold by October 2019 according to Church House Publishing [5.9b]. According to one reviewer, 'The conversation flowed, and they liked the questions and there were a lot of comments that it was very helpful' [5.9b]. This was echoed in the testimony of one repeated user: 'It has been difficult to cut the conversations short at the end of the time allocated to the session – having started, participants don't want to stop' [5.8b]. Based upon the attendances during pilot events (average group size of 20, [5.9a]), this approximates to 120,000 people attending and benefiting from the materials (13.7% of average weekly church attendees in 2019) even if each pack was used only once; and feedback from dioceses indicates packs are used repeatedly. In the wider community, the packs are also used by some funeral directors, in training for care workers, in hospices and in some Death Cafes [5.8a]. 'The experience of the pilot project convinced me of the value of using GraveTalk as a way of encouraging people to reflect on death, on dying and on funerals even though I was initially quite sceptical. Since then, I have made use of the cards in a number of ways in the Church, in the wider Deanery, and in secular contexts... GraveTalk worked surprisingly well on Zoom, and I shall use it again in this way' [5.9b].

### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- 5.1 Lichfield Diocesan Transforming Church and Communities Enabler (provides strategic leadership for social responsibility initiatives within Lichfield Diocese'). Testimonial 12/2019
- 5.2 Dementia Friendly Church Briefing Paper for General Synod Motion on 09 July 2019 (diocesan document)
- 5.3 Dementia Friendly Church video, 07/2020 [here](#).
- 5.4 Calculations of national reach of Dementia Friendly Church Project
- 5.5 Care in Time report and event details (12/2019) [here](#)
- 5.6 Transcript of Pope speech at closing of conference (31/01/2020) and conference details
- 5.7 Web page on research from Pastoral da Pessoa Idosa
- 5.8 GraveTalk testimonials from Head of Life Events for the Archbishops' Council (5.8a) and an early adopter (5.8b)
- 5.9 GraveTalk pilot report 2014 (5.9a) and Sales of GraveTalk resources at 10/2019 (5.9b)