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Our ref: TO00000080337

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Mr David Williams ✓ 18/4.
The General Synod
Church House
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7 April 2006

Dear Mr Williams,

Thank you for your letter of 7 March to Patricia Hewitt concerning hospital chaplaincy. Unfortunately, due to the amount of correspondence Ms Hewitt receives and her daily commitments she cannot respond to all mail personally. Your letter has therefore been passed to me to reply on her behalf.

Thank you for your comments which have been noted by the Department of Health. I hope you will be reassured to know that the Department is fully aware and appreciative of the important role played by hospital chaplains in the NHS, often in very demanding circumstances. The Department recognises that we live in a multi-cultural, multi-faith society and is committed to the principle of ensuring that patients and staff in the NHS have access to the spiritual care they want, whatever faith or belief system they follow.

The Department's policy is set out in the guidance *NHS Chaplaincy: Meeting the Religious and Spiritual Needs of Patients and Staff*, which includes advice to NHS Trusts on worship and sacred spaces. This guidance allows Trusts to deliver religious and spiritual care in a way that best meets the diverse needs of their patients.

The modern NHS must be responsive to the religious needs of its patients. This is integral to its commitment to shaping NHS services to meet the needs and preferences of individual patients, their families and carers, as set out in the *NHS Plan*.

I hope you will be reassured that the NHS will continue to meet the religious and spiritual needs of its patients. Making religious texts available to all NHS patients is just one way in which this commitment is demonstrated.

I hope this reply is helpful. Thank you again for writing on a matter of understandable concern to you.

Yours sincerely,

PP S. Adebayo

Allan Jackson
Customer Service Centre
Department of Health