

Church blocks NHS job offer to clergyman over same-sex marriage

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The first British clergyman to marry a same-sex partner has had a job offer as an NHS chaplain withdrawn after a Bishop revoked his permission to officiate.

Jeremy Pemberton, who currently works as an NHS chaplain in Lincolnshire – having been stopped from operating as a priest in Nottinghamshire following his marriage to Laurence Cunnington – had been offered a job as chaplaincy and bereavement manager in the Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Trust. According to [BBC reporting](#), the Trust informed Mr Pemberton last week that it had withdrawn its offer of a job after the acting Bishop for Southwell and Nottingham, Richard Inwood, had refused him the official licence, known as a permission to officiate, in the diocese.

In a statement the Bishop Inwood, said: "In its pastoral guidance on same-sex marriage, the House of Bishops said that getting married to someone of the same sex was clearly at variance with the teaching of the Church of England.

"The statement said it would not be appropriate conduct for someone in holy orders to enter into a same-sex marriage, given the need for clergy to model the Church's teaching in their lives."

78.5% of recipients in a Church Times [poll](#) opposed the Bishop's decision.

Commenting on BBC Radio Nottingham, Mr Pemberton said: "I've now been treated, I think, in an unfair and rather harsh way in Southwell and Nottingham, whereas I'm now going to carry on doing the job I have been doing in Lincolnshire where I have a licence".

Raising the possibility of a legal challenge, Mr Pemberton said: "I'm not going to bow out gracefully and take a low profile. I think this needs to be tested and I think in due course it probably will be somewhere."

NHS chaplains are salaried employees funded by the taxpayer; in 2012 National Secular Society research revealed that the NHS spends around [£29 million a year](#) on the provision of hospital chaplains. According to the [NHS careers site](#), the "vast majority" of NHS chaplains are Anglicans, while chaplains of other faiths are "recruited in proportion to the belief patterns of the local population."

Stephen Evans, campaigns manager at the National Secular Society, said: "NHS chaplains are supposed to be offering a service to all patients. It's therefore concerning that the Church of England can block an individual from such a position on the basis of their sexual orientation or their entering into a legal marriage.

"In today's diverse and pluralist society, where the majority are non-religious, the provision and funding of NHS services within a specifically religious framework needs urgent review."

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