**Diocese of Westminster - Commitment to Victims and Survivors**

**Updated October 2023**

**Introduction:**

This Commitment aims to ensure that ‘those that report having suffered harm receive a compassionate, caring and timely response, and are provided with access to appropriate support, advice, and pastoral care’ CSSA Standard 3.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The Diocese is committed to trauma informed practice. It acknowledges that ‘Trauma-informed practice acknowledges the need to see beyond an individual’s presenting behaviours and to ask, ‘What does this person need?’ rather than ‘What is wrong with this person?’. [[2]](#footnote-2)

The Diocese takes a zero tolerance approach. This means that: Any abuse of children under the supervision or care of clergy, religious, Church volunteers, employees or persons involved in Church activities will not be tolerated. Such behaviour is contrary to the Gospel and  to  the  Church’s mission,  stated values and ideals, which  require that everyone must be treated with dignity, courtesy and respect.[[3]](#footnote-3)

**The Diocese of Westminster is committed to:**

**Engaging with and caring for those who report being harmed**

* We are committed to helping and supporting victims and Survivors through the process of reporting their experience
* Deciding when, how and why to speak out is a personal matter, whatever the reasons we want them to be heard, taken seriously and be supported.
* As soon as a Victim/ Survivor makes contact with the Safeguarding Service they will be offered a conversation at a time, place / medium to suit them e.g. face to face, telephone, skype
* The Victim/Survivor will be informed that all allegations of abuse will be reported to the Statutory authorities
* An initial letter will be sent to the Victim/Survivor explaining what they can expect of the safeguarding team.
* If the Victim/Survivor is raising concern about a Religious Order, they will be informed that this information will be shared with the Religious Life Safeguarding Service, and information will be provided as to the nature of the relationship between the Religious Order and the Diocese in order for roles and responsibilities to be clear.
* A discussion will be had with the Victim/ Survivor about what information about them will be shared and with whom, as well as what information may be shared with them during the course of the safeguarding process.
* It should be noted that the Diocese has obligations under data protection legislation to other individuals involved in the safeguarding process. It also has a responsibility to share information with Statutory agencies, with diocesan insurers and legal advisers, and with the Charity Commission. These obligations and responsibilities will be fully explained to the victim/Survivor.

**Ongoing Contact and Support**

* The Diocese will actively consider independent funding for counselling on an individual, case by case basis.
* The Diocese will ensure that a referral is made to Safe Spaces in the individual wishes.
* The issue of ongoing contact with the Victim/Survivor by the Safeguarding Service at the conclusion of an investigation and assessment will be considered with them prior to the closing of the case
* The Diocese will signpost to other organisations that have appropriately trained personnel to respond to those who report that they have been harmed.

**Governance and Quality Assurance:**

* The Diocese will provide training for all members of the clergy, staff and volunteers who may receive a disclosure of abuse to help them respond in a compassionate and caring way.
* Victims/Survivors will be invited to comment on the support they have received from the safeguarding service at the conclusion of their involvement. This information will be used to inform future improvements in practice.
* The Victim/ Survivor will be informed of the Complaints procedure should they be dissatisfied with any element of the service they receive
* Any issues raised by the Victim/Survivor in respect of concerns about national policies will be raised with CSAS on their behalf.
* The Victim/Survivors’ perspective on their involvement with the Diocese will form part of the annual safeguarding report to the Board of Trustees.
* Internal Audit of Safeguarding practice by the Audit Sub Group seeks the views of those who report having being harmed.

1. CSSA The Eight National Safeguarding Standards [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. HM Government ‘A working definition of Trauma Informed Practice’ 2.11.2022 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Diocesan Safeguarding Policy December 2022 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)