

The role of Safe Spaces in providing support to survivors of abuse

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FIRST LIGHT

Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Support for All

Who are First Light?



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Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Support for All



Our vision; is a world where everyone lives in safety, free from violence and abuse

Our Mission; Working together to build safer lives free from sexual violence and domestic abuse



Who are First Light?



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- ▶ Devon and Cornwall based Charity for Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence
- ▶ Provide ISVA, DA and counselling services for Cornwall
- ▶ ISVA services for Devon, Swindon and Wiltshire
- ▶ Swindon SARC
- ▶ Sit on boards and inform police and social services policy across South-West and recognised as experts in abuse support nationally
- ▶ Safe Spaces service from January 2023, following 2 year pilot scheme by Victim Support and Fear-Less (Splitz)

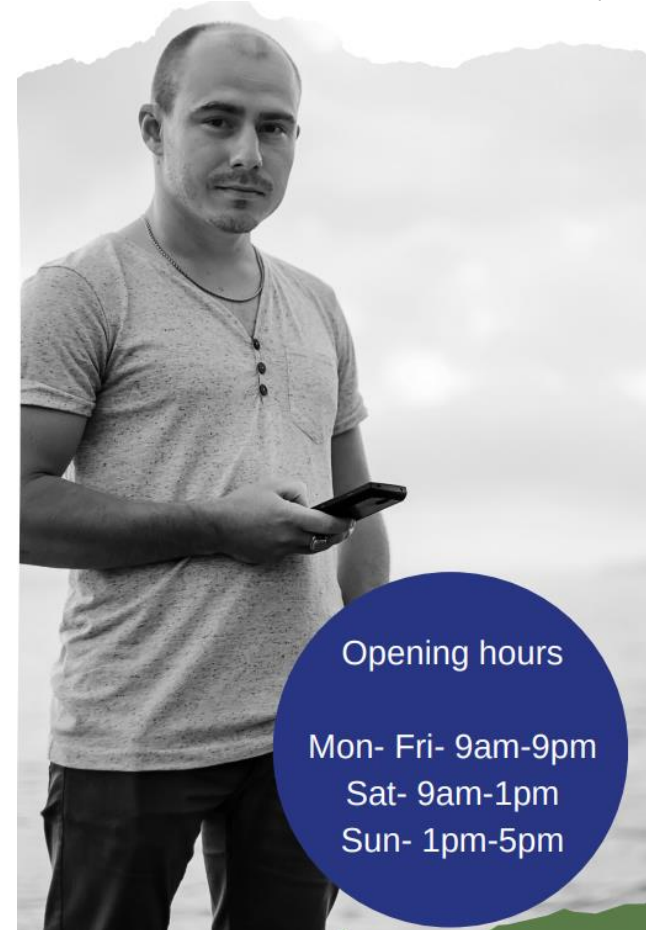


Safe Spaces Mission Statement



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- ▶ Safe Spaces is a free and independent support service, providing a confidential, personal and safe space for anyone who has been abused by someone in the Church or as a result of their relationship with the Church of England, the Catholic Church in England and Wales or the Church in Wales.
- ▶ If you have been affected, however long ago, Safe Spaces can provide you with support. You do not have to have told the police or the church authorities, and you do not have to still be involved with the church. Your information will not be shared without your consent unless you or someone else is in immediate danger.



Opening hours

Mon- Fri- 9am-9pm

Sat- 9am-1pm

Sun- 1pm-5pm



Who are Safe Spaces?



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- ▶ A small team, currently consisting of myself (manager), 2.5x Caseworkers (ISVA trained) and 1.5x Support Advisors.
- ▶ Caseworkers handle fixed caseload of assigned clients.
- ▶ Support Advisors handle new contacts to the service and general inbox enquiries/admin
- ▶ The team have received additional specific training in how the churches respond to abuse cases, the way in which faith and church-related settings have been used to carry out abuse, and the particular issues affecting people who have had or still have, a relationship with the church.
- ▶ Our service is for people (18+) who have experienced any kind of abuse - this includes (but is not limited to) sexual violence, inappropriate sexual behaviour, physical abuse, financial abuse or exploitation, psychological abuse (including spiritual abuse), domestic abuse, coercive and controlling behaviour and so-called conversion therapy.



Initial Approach and Targets



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- ▶ As with all First Light services, we are a victim/survivor focused service.
- ▶ It is not our job to question and challenge survivors, but to empower them to seek what they want/need to feel supported and help them make progress towards recovery.
- ▶ At times, this will take the form of amplifying a survivor voice and challenging the stance of a Diocese or Safeguarding Coordinators.
- ▶ Creating and using directories of contacts based on location, nationally available, 24hr, gender specific, denomination specific, secular - with clear signposting and referral routes. These can benefit both clients and Dioceses.
- ▶ Liaise and work regularly with services, finding peer support groups and training in order to build a network of contacts and working partnerships. Therapists with the available skillset to support our clients will be an essential resource. Once again, these contacts and resources can benefit a Diocese as much as a client when positive outcomes are achieved.



What Safe Spaces can do



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- ▶ Receive initial contact from survivors who have never spoken to anyone regarding their abuse before. Give independent advice and discuss the options they have moving forwards (Email/Phone/Webchat)
- ▶ Become a single point of contact (SPOC) for clients who find it hard to engage directly with Dioceses or Safeguarding. This helps clients to remain engaged and Dioceses to be able to focus on investigations while we deliver emotional help and channel enquiries/question and communication between both parties.
- ▶ Provide emotional support to clients (as an independent agency) in hours and out of hours. Able to discuss matters of faith and spirituality from an independent viewpoint. Reassurance and a safe space to vent frustrations and speak openly. Help clients process and understand abuse and guilt/shame/self-blame. All MH first-aid trained.



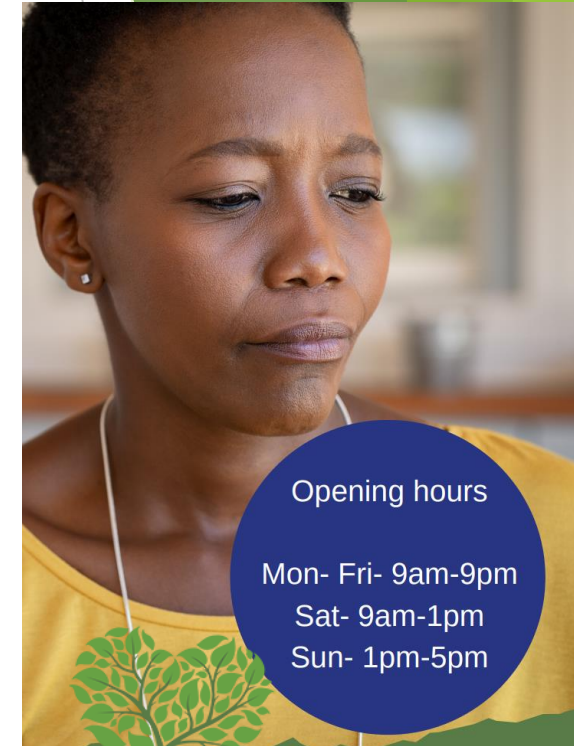
What Safe Spaces can do



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- ▶ Practical support in form of onward signposting and referral to other support agencies. Peer support groups, therapy and counselling, crisis support and mental health crisis services, local abuse support services and reporting to police. We can also assist with completing forms, applications, writing statements to assist both client and Diocesan safeguarding teams
- ▶ Complete risk assessments and support plans/goals/targets with survivors to help move focus away from investigations/complaints against church. Focus on targets within control to improve wellbeing, and managing survivor expectations.
- ▶ Provide out of hours support - Mon-Fri 5-9pm, Sat 9am-1pm, Sun 1-5pm
- ▶ Be a survivor focused service, able to empower clients to move on with their lives by acting on their behalf, providing them with advice and emotional support needed.



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Contacting Safe Spaces



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- ▶ We are also available for Dioceses and Safeguarding teams to contact and ask for advice or make referrals (referral form available on website, or can be emailed to you).
- ▶ We want to work proactively, productively and positively with Dioceses and Safeguarding to benefit survivors.
- ▶ Email: safespaces@firstlight.org.uk for general inquiries/referrals
- ▶ Email: martin.nelson@firstlight.org.uk to contact management
- ▶ Phone: 0300 303 1056 to speak to a support advisor
- ▶ Website: <https://www.safespacesenglandandwales.org.uk/>



Thank you for your time!
Questions?

