



Embargoed to 1200 midday Thursday Sept 1, 2022

Churches to continue support for abuse victims following successful two-year pilot

The Church of England and Catholic Church in England and Wales will be continuing to provide support for victims of church-based abuse, following a successful two-year pilot of the [Safe Spaces](#) service.

Currently delivered by the independent charity Victim Support, Safe Spaces, is a free national support service which offers a confidential, personal and safe space for anyone who has been abused through their relationship with either the Church of England or the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

Since the service began in September 2020, a team of trained support advocates, specialising in church-based abuse, has supported more than 300 victims.

Having successfully delivered the pilot, [Victim Support](#) will be continuing to support people currently using the service, before handing over to a long-term provider in January.

However interim arrangements are being put in place later this month. From September 23 new users of the service will be supported by [Splitz Support Service](#), a specialist support and advocacy charity with experience in working with survivors of church-related abuse.

A tendering process is getting under way to appoint a long-term provider following the interim period.

The Church of England's Bishop of Southampton, Debbie Sellin, a trustee of Safe Spaces, said: "We have seen over the last two years how Safe Spaces provides a vital support service to those who have experienced church-related abuse and I am encouraged that we are now moving to establish it on a longer-term footing.

"I wish to thank everyone at Victim Support for all they have done and continue to do in support of victims and survivors of abuse.

"As the pilot phase comes to an end it is important that we now move to put a long-term provider in place and I'm grateful to Splitz Support Service and Victim Support for supporting this transition phase.

"I want to reassure existing users of this vital service that they will continue to receive support from the same team during the transition to a new long term provider and that new users will be supported by our transitional provider."

Bishop Paul Mason, Lead Bishop for Safeguarding at the Catholic Church in England and Wales, Board Member of the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA), said: "The impact of abuse on any individual can be complex and life-long.

“It is vital that victims and survivors of church-related abuse get the support they need, when they need it, from an independent specialist source.

“Whether you have used the Space Spaces service previously, are currently receiving support, or may in the future, we will do everything we can to make sure there is always this free, confidential service available to you.”

Claire Marshall, Chief Executive of Splitz Support Service, said: “Splitz Support Service recognises the importance of the work of Safe Spaces and the urgent need to support people who have experienced church based abuse.

“We are honoured to be taking the service forward at this crucial time and committed to providing the best possible service for the victims of abuse in its many forms.”

Victim Support said that they will be working closely with the Church to ensure a smooth transition:

“As always, the wellbeing of victims remains at the heart of everything we do. As this successful pilot comes to an end we will be working closely with the Churches to ensure a smooth transition and extending our support for victims currently in our service in the meantime.”