



Westminster Safeguarding Service

Diocese of Westminster - Commitment to Victims and Survivors

Introduction

The Diocese of Westminster aims to ensure that ‘those that report having suffered harm receive a compassionate, caring and timely response by trained Diocesan personnel, and are provided with access to appropriate support, advice, and pastoral care’¹

The Diocese is committed to trauma-informed practice. acknowledging the need to see beyond an individual’s presenting behaviours and to ask, ‘What does this person need?’² rather than ‘What is wrong with this person?’²

The Diocese takes a zero-tolerance approach to abuse which means that any abuse of children, adults at risk or adults with vulnerabilities under the supervision or care of clergy, religious, Church volunteers, employees or persons involved in Church activities will not be tolerated.

The Diocese recognises that speaking out about abuse can be very difficult and distressing and those harmed by abuse may not have felt able to tell anyone before. We are here to support people to share their experiences.

This Commitment includes contact information, what to expect when contacting the service, our commitment to survivors, and various resources and links for sources of support.

The Diocese of Westminster Safeguarding Service contact details

- Email: safeguarding@rcdow.org.uk
- Telephone: 020 7798 9352, and choose option 1

The Diocese of Westminster Safeguarding Service

As part of our commitments to those who have been harmed by abuse, The Safeguarding Service offers

- **A Safe point of contact:** Contact for victims and survivors of abuse within the Catholic Church, supporting both those who were abused as children and those adults at risk who have been abused.

¹ CSSA Standard 3

² HM Government ‘A working definition of Trauma Informed Practice’ 2.11.2022



- **Non-judgmental listening:** Safeguarding case officers offer a non-judgmental and respectful space for you to share their stories and experiences at your own pace. It is up to you what and how much you share depending on what you are comfortable with. They might ask you some questions but this is only so they can better understand your experiences. They will let you know what will happen next and arrange a time to contact you again to give you feedback or an update.
- **Support options:** We will give you an information leaflet '[Hurt by Abuse](#)' which outlines what you can expect from the Safeguarding Service and the support available.
- **Referrals to statutory agencies:** All disclosures of abuse are referred to statutory agencies (Police, Children's Services, Adult Services). Any referrals to statutory agencies will be made in discussion with you and you will be able to choose whether your complaint is reported anonymously to the police, and whether you consent to a police investigation
- **Commitment to survivors:** The Safeguarding Service is dedicated to ensuring that those hurt by abuse are heard and that children, adults at risk and adults with vulnerabilities are kept safe.

Engaging with and caring for those who report being harmed

We are committed to helping and supporting those who have been harmed by abuse through the process of reporting their experience.

Deciding when, how and why to speak out is a personal matter, whatever the reasons we want those who report abuse to be heard, taken seriously and be supported.

As soon as a Victim or Survivor contacts the Safeguarding Service, they will be offered a conversation at a time, place / medium to suit them e.g. face to face, telephone, video conferencing platform.

The Victim or 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 or Survivor explaining what they can expect of the Safeguarding Service.

If the Victim/Survivor is alleging abuse by a member of a religious order, they will be informed that this information will be shared with the religious order and where affiliated, with the Religious Life Safeguarding Service (RLSS).

During the safeguarding process, we will explain the obligations on the Diocese to share information with statutory agencies, diocesan insurers, legal advisers, and the Charity Commission, as well as the information which may be shared with them.



Managing Information

Please see our Diocese of Westminster [Privacy Notice for Victims and Survivors who report abuse](#) which explains how we may need and use information, if you report any abuse within the Diocese.

We also have a general [Privacy Statement](#) for the Diocese which explains how the Diocese will deal with your personal information. A summary is provided [here](#).

Ongoing Contact and Support

The Diocese will consider independent funding for counselling on an individual, case by case basis. The Diocese will ensure that a referral is made to Safe Spaces³ if the individual wishes. At the conclusion of the investigation and assessment stage, the Safeguarding Service will signpost those who report abuse to other organisations which can provide ongoing support.

Governance and Quality Assurance:

The Trustee's Safeguarding Committee has responsibility for the governance of the work of the Safeguarding Service and reports quarterly to the [Trust Board](#). The victim/survivors' perspective on their involvement with the Diocese will form part of the Annual Report made by the Trustee's Safeguarding Committee to the Trust Board.

The Diocese actively seeks the views of those who report having been harmed as part of its quality assurance activities, and to prevent future harm. Victims or Survivors will be invited to comment on the work of the Safeguarding Service in their handling of their complaint or allegation at the conclusion of their involvement. This information will be used to inform future improvements in practice.

Should they be dissatisfied with any element of the service they have received, the Victim or Survivor will be able to access the Diocesan Safeguarding Service Complaints Policy and Procedure. This policy is published on the Diocese of Westminster [website](#).

Any issues raised by the Victim or Survivor about national policies will be raised with the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA) on their behalf.

Escalation Process

As part of our commitment to supporting survivors, victims or those impacted by abuse we recognise that everyone has individual needs. Whilst we will try hard to ensure we adopt a bespoke approach tailored to your needs, we understand that we may not meet your expectations, or you may wish for the service to adopt an alternative approach more suited to your needs.

³ The free and independent support service which provides a confidential, personal and safe space for anyone who has been abused through their relationship with the Catholic Church in England and Wales



We urge that in the first instance, you raise your concern with the member of the Safeguarding Service with whom you are engaging. This will enable them to quickly address the issue and where appropriate make any reasonable adjustments.

If you feel uncomfortable to do this, you can ask to speak with their line-manager or Head of Safeguarding.

Should you remain dissatisfied with how the Safeguarding Service has dealt with you or responded to your request, we have a [Safeguarding Complaints Policy](#) where you can escalate and raise your complaint both informally or more formally.

Should you have a complaint in relation to the handling of your information. Our [DOW privacy statement](#) provides details of our Data Protection Officer and Information Commissioners Office (ICO)



Sources of Support

Hurt by Abuse Leaflet	This is the official leaflet for the Westminster Diocese which contains helpful information for survivors of abuse.
Safe in Faith - Caritas Westminster	Providing survivors of domestic abuse, who are part of a faith community, with safe, faith-based support and counselling that is tailored to their needs as believers. For more details about Safe in Faith you can access their website here
Respond Listen Support	This is the official leaflet for the Westminster Diocese about support to survivors of abuse.
Minister and Clergy Sexual Abuse Survivors	MACSAS supports women and men who have been sexually abused, as children or adults, by ministers, clergy or others under the guise of the Church
Grief to Grace UK – Healing the wounds of abuse	Founded in Pennsylvania in 2006, Grief to Grace now ministers in several dioceses in the USA, Canada and Kingston, Jamaica. With the support of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Southwark, The Most Reverend Peter Smith, the program was first piloted in the UK in 2011 and established as a UK charity in 2014.
The Survivors' Trust	The Survivors Trust (TST) is a UK-wide national umbrella agency for 130 specialist organisations to support the impact of rape, sexual violence and childhood sexual abuse throughout the UK and Ireland.
One in Four	Supporting people who have experienced child sexual abuse and trauma
NAPAC	The National Association for People Abused in Childhood offers support to adult survivors of all types of childhood abuse, including physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect.
ICAP	Immigrant Counselling and Psychotherapy is a charity providing counselling and



	psychotherapy, providing a space to talk with a trained and experienced professional in a safe, confidential, non-judgmental space.
Safe Spaces England and Wales	Safe Spaces can be contacted on 0300 303 1056 Opening hours will be extended to Monday to Friday 9am – 9pm, Saturday 9-1pm and Sunday from 1-5pm (excluding bank holidays, subject to review)

Domestic Abuse Support

www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk	Refuge - Freephone National Domestic Abuse Helpline - 0808 200 0247
www.sdafmh.org.uk	Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline - 0800 027 1234
www.karmanirvana.org.uk	Karma Nirvana runs a national honour-based abuse helpline. - 0800 5999 247 or support@karmanirvana.org.uk
www.signhealth.org.uk	Sign Health provides domestic abuse service support for deaf people in British Sign Language (BSL). - 020 3947 2601 or da@signhealth.org.uk
www.respectphoneline.org.uk	Respect Domestic Abuse Helpline - 0808 802 4040
www.mensadviceline.org.uk	Men's Domestic Abuse - 0808 801 0327
www.livefearfree.gov.wales	Live Fear Free helpline (Wales) - 0808 80 10 800

Child Abuse Support

www.napac.org.uk	NAPAC - The National Association for People Abused in Childhood
www.thesurvivorstrust.org	The Survivors Trust
www.nspcc.org.uk	NSPCC - National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
www.the-childrens-society.org.uk	The Children's Society
www.barnardos.org.uk	Barnardo's



Sexual Abuse support

www.rapecrisis.org.uk	Rape Crisis (England and Wales) - 0808 802 9999
www.womensaidni.org	Women's Aid Federation (Northern Ireland) - Freephone 0808 802 1414
www.southallblacksisters.org.uk	Southall Black Sisters offer advocacy and information to Asian and Afro-Caribbean women suffering abuse

Other support links

www.wearehourglass.org/	Action on Elder Abuse, support to an older person or anyone concerned about an older person.
www.shelter.org.uk	Shelter provides free confidential information, support and legal advice on all housing & homelessness issues
www.galop.org.uk	Galop (for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people) - 0800 999 5428
www.survivorsvoices.org	Survivors Voices is an abuse survivor-led organisation providing resources to improve responses to trauma.