



Westminster Safeguarding Service

Diocese of Westminster - Commitment to Victims and Survivors

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'¹

The Diocese of Westminster 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?' 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.

We recognise that speaking out about abuse can be very difficult and distressing and you may not have felt able to tell anyone before. We are here to support you to share your experiences.

This Commitment includes contact information, what to expect when contacting the service, our commitment to survivors, and various resources and links for 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 Victims and Survivors of abuse, The Safeguarding Service offers

- **Safe point of contact:** The Safeguarding Service provides a safe point of contact for victims and survivors of abuse within the Catholic Church, supporting both those who were abused as children and those who have been abused as adults.

¹ CSSA Standard 3

² HM Government 'A working definition of Trauma Informed Practice' 2.11.2022



- **Non-judgmental listening:** Safeguarding 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. The Safeguarding Service will listen in a way that is non-judgmental and built on a foundation of respect for you and how you feel. 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:** The officers will discuss the various support options available to you and provide information on what will happen next, including arranging follow-up contact. We also publish an information leaflet called '[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's Services) in line with the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency's guidelines to protect others from harm. Any referrals to statutory agencies will be made in discussion with you and you will be able to choose whether or not you consent to a police investigation
- **Commitment to survivors:** The service is dedicated to ensuring that you are heard and that children, adults at risk and adults with vulnerabilities are kept safe.

Our commitment to:

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 them to be heard, taken seriously and be supported.

As soon as a Victim or 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, 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 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.



During the course of the safeguarding process, we will discuss the obligations on the Diocese to share information with statutory agencies, diocesan insurers, legal advisers, and the Charity Commission.

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 Spaces³ in the individual wishes. At the conclusion of the investigation and assessment stage, the Safeguarding Service will discuss the issue of ongoing contact with the Victim or Survivor once the case is closed. 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 or 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 or Survivor will be informed of the Complaints procedure should they be dissatisfied with any element of the service they receive. Any issues raised in respect of concerns about national policies will be raised with the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA) 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. The Diocese actively seeks the views of those who report having been harmed as part of its quality assurance activities, and in order to prevent future harm.

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



Sources of Support

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| 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 |



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| | 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

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| www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk | Refuge - Freephone National Domestic Abuse Helpline - 0808 200 0247 |
| sdafmh.org.uk | Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline - 0800 027 1234 |
| support@karmanirvana.org.uk | Karma Nirvana runs a national honour-based abuse helpline. - 0800 5999 247 |
| da@signhealth.org.uk | Sign Health provides domestic abuse service support for deaf people in British Sign Language (BSL). - 020 3947 2601 |
| 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

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| 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

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| www.rapecrisis.org.uk | Rape Crisis (England and Wales) - 0808 802 9999 |
| www.womensaidni.org | Southall Black Sisters offer advocacy and information to Asian and Afro-Caribbean women suffering abuse |

Other support links

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| www.elderabuse.org.uk | Action on Elder Abuse |
| 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 |

Your Personal Information

To read about how the Diocese will deal with your personal information, please read the [Privacy - Diocese of Westminster](#)