

were still hurting children and vulnerable adults to be identified and prosecuted – thus ending much of the abusing behaviour. You can contact your local Safeguarding Coordinator or the Police in confidence.

- If you are able to give a name to the abuser (whether they are still alive or not), your prayer guide or spiritual director will pass this on to their Safeguarding Lead. You can remain anonymous.

If I disclose something about abuse, will the rest of my sessions be focused on it?
Absolutely not! You and the Holy Spirit are in control of what you share. If the abuse is current, your guide may just check whether you have reported it and how you are feeling, but they will not force you to discuss this.

Will I upset my guide or director by talking about this?

No. Your guide or director will be concerned for you, of course. They have had training to help them in listening to people in difficult situations. They also have a supervisor with whom they can share anything that troubles them – all the while respecting your anonymity.

What if I want to stop the Week after reporting abuse?

You have every right to stop. Your guide will keep your appointment time free and will use it to pray for you and for the situation you have shared. You can also come and just ask for a time of quiet with them. They will be very happy to share that time with you. They want you to feel you can allow yourself to be supported by prayerful reflection with another person.

What if I need ongoing spiritual support after the Week of Accompanied Prayer?

Your prayer guide can give you information about ongoing spiritual direction. Very occasionally, they may be able to offer this but, usually, they will suggest someone whose main focus is longer-term direction.

If you are a survivor, your Diocesan Safeguarding Team may be able to help with ongoing support.

So – Safeguarding is part of seeking the Truth that makes us free?

Yes! Safeguarding is part of being part of the Body of Christ and, as Pope Francis reminds us,

'If one member suffers, all suffer together with it'.
1 Corinthians 12: 26.

A more open approach will, hopefully, lead to fewer people suffering and make our Church a safer, more secure people for everyone.

You can be part of that change: your truth may be what is needed to help people to be free.

The Isaiah Journey is a working group of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales which has grown out of the need for a pastoral-spiritual response to the suffering of victims and survivors of abuse in the Church.

The Isaiah Journey
seeking truth | bringing hope | finding healing

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**The Truth
will make
you free**

(John 8:32)

**A Safeguarding Guide
for Participants
in Weeks of
Accompanied Prayer**

Confidential not Secret

Meetings with your prayer guide or spiritual director are private and confidential. They are not, however, secret.

What does this mean?

Everything you share is treated as confidential unless it relates to any form of abuse – whatever form this takes. It may be that during a Week of Accompanied Prayer or spiritual direction, you may feel prompted to share something about abuse. This might be from your personal experience – present or past – or concerns for others that you are not sure how to deal with. You do not need to share anything you do not want to.

Your prayer guide or spiritual director will respect your confidentiality but is not allowed to keep such things secret.

Why is this?

The Church and society at large have learnt the hard way about the reality and extent of abuse and how poorly we have responded to it.

In a letter to the People of God, Pope Francis wrote:

With shame and repentance, we acknowledge as an ecclesial community that we were not where we should have been, that we did not act in a timely manner, realizing the magnitude and the gravity of the damage done to so many lives.'

Among the biggest causes of that shame are the secrecy and covering up that went on. This added greatly to the suffering of those who had been abused and caused anger and pain to those not directly affected by dismayed by what they are hearing.

The Church insists that we cannot keep abuse secret, in line with best secular practice

So what happens if I share something about abuse?

- This will depend on various factors.

If the abuse is happening now — to children or vulnerable adults.

This will require urgent action.

You may feel guilty and disloyal to the person committing the abuse but, by reporting it, you are protecting someone who needs you to speak the truth about what is happening to them and help to free them from it. You are also, in a way, helping the perpetrator to become accountable for behaving in a sinful way which will then assist in reducing further harm to others.

You may worry about being wrong. This is common and it is now recognised that this fear often lay at the heart of people not reporting abuse. We often hear in the media how many opportunities were missed in protecting children who were suffering or who died because of abuse. Your raising concerns could save a lot of suffering.

The Safeguarding Coordinator and the Police have extensive training and are well-qualified to act and help to ensure the safety of those you are concerned for.

- Your guide or spiritual director will encourage you to share this immediately with a Safeguarding coordinator and will give you the details and support in doing this. You can do this anonymously.
- They are also obliged to share the information with a Safeguarding Lead who will refer it on.

If the abuse is happening now – to you, to an adult friend or family member.

There is help available if you or another adult is a victim of domestic abuse and your guide will have details of this. It can take courage and several attempts to move away, but there is support to help you or a loved one find safety. The truth may be uncomfortable, but it is often the only way to set you or someone you care about free.

- Your prayer guide or spiritual director will encourage you to report this.
- Your guide or spiritual director is also required to report this to their Safeguarding Lead – this can be done without identifying you.



If the abuse is in the past and not recent.

It may be that you experienced – or know about – abuse that happened a long time ago. Sharing this now can help to begin a process of healing as we have learnt so much about how it can haunt people for many years – especially, if they have not been believed in the past. It can also be vital in building a picture of abuse that is happening in the present. A high-profile example of this is the case of Jimmy Saville. After his death, many survivors came forward to share what had happened to them, and this led to people who