

15 Support for those Affected by Allegations of Abuse within the Church setting

- 15.1 The Church seeks to providing a compassionate, caring, and respectful response to all individuals who have been affected by allegations of abuse within a church setting, and who seek its help and healing. All reasonable efforts will be made to ensure that support is offered to those who seek it, confidentially, quickly, and effectively. Support will be focussed on the best interests and welfare of adults and where support is provided, it will be done in a manner which respects the individual's dignity, privacy and safety, and which ensures so far as possible that particular needs relating to race, culture, age, language, religious beliefs, gender, sexual orientation or disability are addressed.
- 15.2 It is the responsibility of Bishops and Religious Leads to ensure that the availability of pastoral support is publicised in Churches or other places where ministry takes place.
- 15.3 Where statutory agencies are involved all arrangements for the provision of support will be undertaken in close liaison with these agencies.
- 15.4 Where an individual consents to support being provided, all requests for support must be made to the Safeguarding Coordinator, or Religious Safeguarding Lead within the religious congregation.
- 15.5 The Provision of support for individuals alleging abuse
- 15.6 This includes allegations of abuse, whether occurring in the past or recently, by a person acting in a church capacity within any parish, religious congregation made by:
- All adults, regardless of whether the alleged abuse occurred in childhood or as an adult.
- 15.7 In respect of individuals alleging abuse, the role of the Safeguarding Coordinator is to:

- Be a point of contact or identify a point of contact for victims/survivors/family members, for the purpose of providing written and verbal updates, at regular agreed intervals, in relation to case management (not claims management);
 - Identify support needs and how these will be met, in consultation with statutory authorities where appropriate;
 - Ensure that anybody appointed to provide support does not have role in case management, claims management or penal/disciplinary processes within the Church.
- 15.8 The Safeguarding Coordinator must not deal with or discuss claims that are being made by a victim/survivor but must refer them to the diocesan or congregational Insurance Officer.
- 15.9 The Safeguarding Coordinator must not take a dual role of supporting the person making an accusation of abuse and supporting the person accused of abuse, although they will act as a point of contact for both.
- 15.10 It is the responsibility of Safeguarding Coordinators, supported by Safeguarding Commissions to assist Bishops and Religious Congregation Leaders in identifying suitably skilled, experienced, and supervised individuals to provide routine pastoral support¹⁸.
- 15.11 Where an individual requests support beyond routine pastoral support, such as the provision of formal counselling, or financial support, this must be directed by the Safeguarding Coordinator (dioceses and independent commissions) or Safeguarding Lead in a religious congregation, with their recommendations, to the insurance Officer. The Insurance Officer must liaise with the Insurers, before referring the request to the Trustees to decide on the extent and nature of any support to be offered. Where appropriate, the requirements of the Charity Commission will be followed.
- 15.12 Where the Trustees have agreed that formal counselling or financial support may be appropriate, the Safeguarding Coordinator or Religious Safeguarding Lead will arrange this. There will be a written agreement between the Church and the individual setting out the parameters of the support to be offered by the Church. This, and any other written communication or documents relevant to the issue of support, will be kept by the diocese or the religious congregation. A record of the support provided should also be kept on the safeguarding file.

¹⁸ Routine pastoral support includes for example emotional and spiritual support, accompaniment, time to listen and time to reflect

