

SAFE SPACES

Safe Spaces is a free and independent support service, providing a confidential, personal and safe space for anyone who has been abused by someone in the Church or as a result of their relationship with the Church of England, the Catholic Church in England and Wales or the Church in Wales.

WHAT IS CHURCH ABUSE?

Our service is for people who have experienced any kind of abuse – this includes (but is not limited to) sexual violence, inappropriate sexual behaviour, physical abuse, financial abuse or exploitation, psychological abuse (including spiritual abuse), domestic abuse, coercive and controlling behaviour and so-called conversion therapy.

The impact will be different for different people and vary according to the type and extent of the abuse. Assumptions cannot be made that abuse which we might assume to be less serious has had a less damaging impact on someone. There is some evidence that the impact of abuse can be especially severe when the abuse has occurred within the church and has been justified by religious concepts. In particular, survivors can feel betrayed both by the abuser and by God.

We can help you to process and understand the impact that any abuse has had on you and those around you.

HOW CAN WE HELP?

Remote support is provided nationally through our helpline on [0300 303 1056](tel:03003031056)

You can also email safespaces@firstlight.org.uk, or use the webchat service available on this website.

We can help with advocating with authorities and other agencies, giving you emotional support, understanding your needs and working together on individual support plans. If face-to-face support is wanted local to where you live, we will try to contact appropriate agencies depending on need.

This support can be in the form of;

- providing you with information (including information on church and criminal justice procedures and options)
- reporting abuse to the Diocesan safeguarding team with you or on your behalf
- attending meetings with relevant agencies and professionals alongside you
- helping you complete paperwork and applications
- helping you to access listening services, counselling, or therapy (including funding)
- helping you to make an official complaint about a member of clergy
- helping you to receive an apology or accountability
- helping you with any appeal processes or complaints
- providing signposting and referrals to partner and other agencies for further support, including solicitors for legal advice and mental health professionals and services
- Providing emotional support alongside practical guidance and assistance

For more information please access our website: <https://safespacesenglandandwales.org.uk/>