THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

Introduction

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Version: 1

This Guidance outlines requirements and advice for Church Officers1 and Church Bodies2 on how to respond well to victims and survivors of all forms of abuse. The Guidance contributes to the implementation of Recommendation 7 of The Anglican Church Investigation Report by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA):

*The Church of England and the Church in Wales should each introduce a Church-wide policy on the funding and provision of support to victims and survivors of child sexual abuse concerning clergy, Church officers or those with some connection to the Church. The policy should clearly set out the circumstances in which different types of support, including counselling, should be offered. It should make clear that support should always be offered as quickly as possible, taking into account the needs of the victim over time. The policy should take account of the views of victims and survivors. It should be mandatory for the policy to be implemented across all dioceses. (*IICSA*, 2020; p.117).*

The allegations that Church Officers respond to will involve victims and survivors with different connections to the Church. Some may use the Church and its associated activities occasionally, some may be part of a church community, and some may be employees of the Church and some may be clergy. Some victims and survivors disclosing to Church Officers will allege abuse by people who have no links with the Church (e.g. in their family life) and others will allege abuse by Church Officers or within a Church context (e.g. activities organised by Church Bodies). Some victims or survivors may also disclose first to statutory services and other third parties who will then contact the Church.

Structure and application

Section 1 of this Guidance focuses on responding well to all people who allege abuse irrespective of the alleged abuser's relationship with the Church. **Sections 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7** specifically concern the support that should be offered to victims and survivors of abuse by a Church Officer or in a Church setting ("Church-based abuse"). Much of this work will be led by the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) or the Cathedral Safeguarding Adviser3 (CSA) in the Church Body. **Section 8** explains the support provided by the Central Church.

The Guidance is about the relational and support aspects of responding well. It should be read alongside the specific procedural steps to be taken when concerns and allegations of abuse are raised. These are set out in:

- Practice guidance: Responding to, assessing and managing safeguarding concerns or allegations against Church Officers (**the sections on Support Persons and Apology will be superseded by the relevant parts of this Guidance from the effective date of 4 April 2022**).
- Practice guidance: Responding to safeguarding concerns or allegations that relate to children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- The Parish Safeguarding Handbook.

This Guidance is about creating safe conditions for disclosure and the responsibility to meet the spiritual, pastoral and welfare needs of victims

and survivors afterwards. It focuses on the response of Church Bodies. However, Church Bodies are partners within wider networks of support for victims and survivors, comprising statutory services – for example local authorities' children's and adults' social care services, the police, services provided by the National Health Service (NHS) and local schools - and non-statutory organisations (for example, charities such as the NSPCC and local voluntary services for domestic abuse). To this end, this Guidance encourages Church Bodies to develop their knowledge and relationships with these organisations so that victims and survivors can be appropriately sign-posted or referred if necessary.

Victims and survivors were involved in the development of this Guidance. They participated through focus groups and interviews, and they were involved in reviewing drafts. The painful but vital lesson for the Church of England is that when some victims and survivors have disclosed abuse, poor responses by Church Officers compounded the trauma experienced. Although this breached their trust in the Church, survivors involved in developing this Guidance also highlighted the role of their faith, spirituality, the Church's teachings, and therapy in their recovery and healing. This Guidance is offered as part of the Church's commitment to responding better in the future and is dedicated to the survivors who have contributed to its formulation.

In addition to their participation in the developmental work, the Guidance also draws on the literature on the needs of victims of survivors; the ethics of involvement and the "Final overview report of the independent diocesan safeguarding audits and additional work on improving responses to survivors of abuse" (Carmi, Ed & Fish Sheila, 2019; Social Care Institute for Excellence, 2019). It is also underpinned by the prevailing consensus that abuse can cause trauma:

"Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being". (

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration*, 2014; p. 7).*

The status of this Guidance

Please note: this section will be amended when the Safeguarding Code of Practice comes into effect.

This is safeguarding Guidance issued by the House of Bishops under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016. The following must have "due regard" to safeguarding Guidance issued by the House of Bishops:

- All authorised clergy
- Bishops
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Archdeacons

- Licensed readers
- Licensed lay workers
- Churchwardens
- PCCs
- Cathedral Chapters
- DBEs

A duty to have “due regard” to Guidance means that the person under the duty is not free to disregard it but is required to follow it unless there are cogent reasons for not doing so. “Cogent” for this purpose means clear, logical and convincing. Failure by a member of the clergy to have “due regard” to House of Bishops’ safeguarding Guidance is an act or omission which may constitute misconduct under the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003 (“CDM”). Failure by a licensed reader or lay worker to have due regard to House of Bishops’ safeguarding Guidance would be grounds for the revocation of that reader’s or lay worker’s license by the bishop. Significant failure by charity trustees could result in a statutory investigation being carried out by the Charity Commission. If such an investigation uncovers serious misconduct or mismanagement, the Charity Commission could remove one or more of the trustees and disqualify them from acting as a charity trustee.

The draft Safeguarding (Code of Practice) Measure is expected to obtain Royal Assent in late 2021. Once in force, this Measure will amend the law to allow the House of Bishops to put in place a new code of practice on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. This will specify both requirements (which will be mandatory) and guidance (which will be advisory). The amendments will also expand the categories of person who must comply with the Code of Practice.

This Guidance is designed to be used both before and after the law changes. It is structured into sections that contain both “Requirements” and “Good Practice Advice”. Sections labelled “Requirements” are House of Bishops’ Guidance to which the people specified above must have “due regard” from the date that this Guidance comes into force. They will also comprise the mandatory parts of the Code of Practice when it becomes effective. In this document, “Good Practice Advice” refers to advice and information which supports Church Officers in meeting the Requirements – it explains the “why” and “how” to deliver the Requirements.

Terminology

"Victim" and "survivor" refer to people who have experienced abuse. In this Guidance, it is recognised that people have a right to self-define as "victim" or "survivor". The former usually refers to all situations where people have been harmed or are subject to criminal acts, and the latter refers to peoples' lives after these harmful experiences. Some people choose to identify as "survivor(s)" to show that they have reclaimed power from the abuser and furthermore that, notwithstanding the abuse, they have experienced positive outcomes in their lives, thereby expressing their strength to resist the abuser's ability to dominate their lives.

The distinction between "victim" and "survivor" in this Guidance is for clarification and not intended as a hierarchy of importance. These terms should not be used in a fixed or rigid way and self-identification should be recognised. Furthermore, evidence from IICSA (please see the research reports section) indicates that although abuse has long-term impact, this also depends on institutional and professional responses to the disclosure. Whether people self-identify as victims or survivors, they want clergy and other Church Officers to listen to them, respect their right to protection and focus on addressing the harm caused. This requires Church Officers to provide the same quality of response to people whether they are "survivors" or "victims". People from all backgrounds and positions can become victims and survivors of Church-based and non-Church-based abuse. This includes members of the clergy themselves and their partners and families.

The importance of relationships and empowerment

The quality of the relationships that Church Officers develop with victims and survivors really matters – these relationships are efficacious in their own right. Humane, compassionate and supportive relationships with victims and survivors are vital in responding well to disclosures and providing ongoing support. The expectations of survivors need to be considered from the start, setting up clear boundaries and limits of intervention while relating with compassion and empathy.

Survivors from several research groups point out that they do not need great experts to listen to them; they just need another human being who listens at their pace, does not push them too hard and who recognises that abuse is not their whole story. They also want people who can trust the survivor to be the expert in their own life and offer them the chance to say "no" to help and withdraw their involvement if it is difficult for them or their needs change over time.

Some victims and survivors will be keen, for example, to contact support agencies outside of the Church themselves, and just need help to identify them. The principle of empowerment is paramount: people being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions about the type and sources of support, and responsibility for making arrangements.

It should also be recognised that victims and survivors will decide who they want to make their initial disclosure to. This might be a Church Officer – but they also might not wish to disclose to anyone who is connected with the Church. Some will go directly to statutory authorities such as the

police.

The journey to disclosing abuse

It is possible to use the analogy of "a journey" to describe the stages that victims and survivors experience before and after disclosure. The experience of abuse causes trauma; people then go through a period of contemplating disclosure, then they might disclose and, with appropriate support, recover and rebuild their lives. This whole journey might take several years or may not be completed at all.

Responses to disclosures can influence recovery from abuse. An uncaring approach can reaffirm survivors' self-blame and self-criticism that they are responsible for the abuser's actions and that their disclosures will not be believed. However, a caring and compassionate response underpinned by pastoral and spiritual support, if requested by survivors, can support recovery and healing, and can dismantle the false messages their abuser may have given them.

Church communities in which members are kind and empathetic to each other can provide support to victims and survivors living with the trauma of abuse who do not want to disclose their experiences. In these environments, positive attitudes and good inter-personal relationships can be conducive to survivors' recovery as they may experience support through the love and kindness people demonstrate to each other. This will not be the case in churches with strained inter-personal relationships, strife and unkindness. So, having a healthy church culture really matters.

For those victims and survivors who hold a Christian faith, the Church of England's values and theology may be part of their healing and recovery from abuse. For victims and survivors of abuse by Church Officers, notwithstanding the breach of their trust within the Church of England, they may still want assistance with re-integration and safe worship in their Christian community. Other victims and survivors may wish to sever ties with the Church because of their experiences. These must be recognised as justified responses to the Church's past failings for which they require an apology for the physical, psychological and spiritual harm done to them. Due to this recognition, spiritual and pastoral support and processes for an apology are also outlined in this Guidance (Sections 2 and 3).

Survivor-centeredness

This Guidance is underpinned by the values of co-design and co-production between Church Officers and victims and survivors. In 2020, the National Safeguarding Team (NST) commissioned Survivors Voices to contribute to the development of national standards in responding well to victims and survivors. Through a survey and focus groups with victims and survivors, they identified the following as "what good looks like" in responding well to victims and survivors:

Survivors know that they are heard, understood, believed and will be supported.

2. The response by Church Bodies and Church Officers to disclosures is victim and survivor-centered and does not cause further trauma to the person disclosing.
3. People with safeguarding responsibilities understand the impact of trauma and the best way to respond to it.
4. Churches create a culture of listening, transparency and respect that makes it safe to disclose.
5. Victims and survivors and Church workers know what process will be followed if someone reports abuse.
6. Survivors are helped to receive the support they need, both from the Church and other people and organisations.
7. Safeguarding concerns are acted upon appropriately, transparently, with accountability and in a timely fashion.

Church Bodies can draw on these statements of "what good looks like" in developing the support for victims and survivors outlined in the rest of this Guidance.

Responding well to victims and survivors, and Christian theology

For all people (of faith, no faith or different faiths), responding well to victims and survivors of abuse should be a natural and intuitive set of attitudes and behaviours flowing from their values and beliefs. It does involve following processes, but this needs to come from a position of love rather than fear. For Christians, it is also important to think theologically about safeguarding. A conversation has now started in the Church about theology and safeguarding. The paper 'Theology and Safeguarding: trauma, justice, forgiveness, wholeness, experience and calling' has been co-developed with survivors.

This paper is not a final product; rather it is the start of a process of continual dialogue and self-reflexivity which is essential if the Church is to get safeguarding right. The paper notes, for example, that there are four theological themes that run through Scripture powerfully and can help people begin to think theologically about safeguarding: care for the vulnerable, which is everyone's responsibility, challenging unhealthy power dynamics, and unflinching honesty about our nature. It explains that "not only is Scripture shaped by trauma, understanding trauma is essential to comprehend the impact of abuse. So we cannot speak of theology and safeguarding without thinking about trauma and allowing trauma theory to shape our thinking and responses".

"Responding well" is about helping victims and survivors to achieve "wholeness", to be able to flourish. *"The primary task is to ensure well-being through creating physical, emotional spiritual and financial safety, and offering support to victims and survivors for their physical and mental health".*

1“Church Officer(s)” refers to anyone appointed or elected by or on behalf of the Church to a post or role, whether they are ordained or lay, paid or unpaid.

- 2“Church Bodies” includes Parochial Church Councils (PCC), cathedral chapters, Diocesan Boards of Finance (DBF), Diocesan Boards of Education (DBE), National Church Institutions (NCIs) and Religious Communities.
- 3All references to CSAs in this Guidance are, unless otherwise stated, references to CSAs employed by cathedrals where there is no safeguarding Service Level Agreement in place with the DBF.

This document is version 1 and was printed on 28 March 2024. The most up to date version of this policy can be found on the Church of England website: https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding

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