

A spokesperson for the National Safeguarding Team said: "Safe Spaces is planned as a vital support service for survivors of church-related abuse across the Church of England and the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

"The delay in progressing the support service, first officially discussed in 2014, is a matter of regret which the Church of England acknowledges and apologises for. But since the appointment of a project manager and the creation of the Safe Spaces Management Board last year eight survivor representatives from across both Churches are involved in ensuring we find the right organisation to deliver the project.

"Their knowledge, skill and personal experience in shaping the model for Safe Spaces alongside their commitment and support for the procurement process is integral to finding the right organisation to deliver the project.

"All grant money from both churches and ATL has been ring fenced for the project and no money from the £592,000 grant has been spent to date, and no new company has been set up. Pre set-up costs, procurement, project management and development are separate to this and the cost is being shared across both Churches.

"Following an initial procurement process, the Board has agreed that it would not be recommending the appointment of a preferred supplier to deliver the project; this decision was taken in partnership with the survivor representatives.

"Over the coming weeks the Board in partnership with survivors will agree the next steps and the best way forward. Survivor voices remain central to any future success of this new service and their welfare and support is an absolute priority for the Church in its continuing safeguarding work.

"Both churches are committed to supporting survivors of church-related abuse and providing an independent national service for survivors of any form of church-related abuse."

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