



A new initiative focused on survivors of church-based abuse and those who support them has been launched today.

The initiative spearheaded by Newcastle Diocese, is a response to recent guidance issued by the Church of England to church officers and church bodies on how to respond well to victims and survivors of all kinds of abuse. It has been part funded by the charity [Safe Spaces](#), a free and independent support service, providing a confidential, personal and safe space for anyone who has been abused by someone in the Church.

**If I Told You, What Would You Do?** is a suite of accessible materials and resources, including a series of seven videos with more than 50 people reading the words of survivors, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby and the Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell. Survivors have also produced original artwork and music, which is being made available.

The project was the brainchild of Sarah Troughton and David Creese, both survivors of faith-based abuse, who worked closely with the Diocese of Newcastle's Safeguarding Advisor Carol Butler to develop the content.

The Bishop of Berwick and Acting Bishop of Newcastle, the Right Reverend Mark Wroe said: "I am deeply moved and challenged by this extraordinary piece of work which has been led by those with lived experience of church-based abuse. For far too long there have been those who have suffered abuse in church and not felt safe enough to report it, as well as those who have reported it and not been cared for in the way they deserve. This project works alongside the other safeguarding procedures we now have in place as we continue to learn how to make our churches safer places.

"We believe that one of the best ways we can help individuals and communities to respond well to abuse is through creative projects. This creates space for a conversation between those with lived experience and others in their communities. Imagination is one of the most powerful resources God gives us to foster a more empathetic understanding of the needs of survivors and what helpful responses might look and sound like as we journey forwards together.

"For these reasons we have engaged in creative projects designed and delivered by those with lived experience of abuse, those who minister to them, and others in our communities who support this vital work."

The materials and resources are aimed at:

- those with lived experience of abuse in a church context, those who have spoken out and those who have not yet found a voice
- the families and friends of those who have experienced church-based abuse and are living with the consequences
- clergy and lay members of church bodies who need to see, hear and respond well to those who have experienced trauma and abuse in the

church

- colleagues in non-church professions who work with survivors of church-based abuse (e.g. mental health services) and need to understand the particular impacts of this abuse and how to respond well

Sarah Troughton, a psychiatrist at Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust (CNTW), said: “It is essential that the voice of the survivor of church related abuse is no longer silenced but instead valued so that not only healing but post traumatic growth can occur for the individual and the wider church itself. This ethos is central to the project.”

David Creese added: “By embracing this project, the Church is demonstrating its commitment to all those impacted by such abuse and is therefore moving forward, making the church a more safe and responsive environment.”

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