

In May of this year the Rt. Revd. Paul Butler, the Bishop of Durham, who is the lead Church of England Bishop for safeguarding, initiated some early-stage work with an external safeguarding consultant to develop plans for a 'Safe Space' for reconciliation for survivors of abuse.

The consultant has been working with the Interim National Safeguarding Adviser for the Church of England and a representative of a survivor group to look at the potential shape this project might take. A number of options are still being examined.

One proposal is that the "safe space" work would be carried out by agencies external to the church to provide safe spaces for survivors to be listened to and supported. The kinds of services which such agencies might provide might include the provision of Trained Authorised Listeners to hear disclosures of past or current abuse by church officers, including clergy; counselling/therapy/self help group services and independent risk assessment.

Scoping work is still being carried out and will be discussed in the autumn by Bishop Butler and others, including the National Safeguarding Panel and the Joint Safeguarding Liaison Group.

No decisions have been taken, financial or otherwise, at this stage as the plans are in a scoping phase and options have yet to be considered.

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