

A 'How to' Guide for Survivors applying to the Interim Support Scheme

Version: 007 20-12-2021

This guide is intended to help you with the application process. If your question is not answered by this guide, please email SupportScheme@churchofengland.org for further help. The Scheme is intended to be user-friendly, and survivor-centred and as non-bureaucratic as possible. If you do not find this to be the case, please give us feedback so the Scheme can do better in the future.

1) Am I eligible to apply?

If you are a survivor of Church-related abuse and the abuser was a member of the clergy, a Church officer, Church employee, or Church-sanctioned and recruited volunteer, and you are in distressed circumstances that mean you need urgent support, you may be eligible for assistance.

If you have not previously disclosed the abuse to the Church or the statutory authorities, our initial response will be to ensure that you are supported in making your first disclosure and, if you wish to, help explore whether you would like to take further action. Your application to the Scheme can still progress while this is being carried out.

The abuse can have happened in a Church or Church-related building (hall, vicarage, Church camp, etc), cathedral, religious community or theological education institute. The Scheme does not apply to Church-linked schools or similar secular settings. If the abuse occurred during a pastoral visit by a Church officer to your home, that would also be eligible.

If you are not sure if you are eligible, contact SupportScheme@churchofengland.org for advice.

2) Confidentiality and Consent

The Scheme's Privacy Notice makes clear that your details are held securely and in confidence. You should also have received the Consent Form, which, once you have signed it, allows us to retain and share details of your application with members of the Support Scheme decision panel as necessary. You will need to return the form signed electronically to SupportScheme@churchofengland.org. You will then be assigned a case number, and when application materials are shared with panel members, your personal identity will be anonymised and replaced by this number.

3) Preparing the case for help

This may seem a daunting prospect. That is understood and the scheme can make funding available to you to pay someone to help you as an advocate in this process. This can be a known and trusted friend or a suitably qualified person who has experience in preparing needs assessments. If you decide to use an advocate, this person will be sent a document making clear their role, what is required of them and what funding is available for their work. If you have special needs or a disability, the Support Scheme Office has contacts with specialist advocates who may be able to assist.

What information does the Scheme Office need?

Please use the Application Form to outline what your urgent needs are. However, if you find the form difficult to use, you may choose to explain such needs in simple terms in an email. Here are some simple examples:

"My washing machine keeps breaking down. I have a young family and so it is in constant use. I need £500 to replace it and have it fitted in my home"

“I have been affected by PTSD since my abuse. I have tried a couple of sessions of XXXX therapy and found them very beneficial. My therapist has recommended a 6-months course of fortnightly treatments. Their report is attached. This would cost £1,500.”

The Scheme will not ordinarily approve payments in connection with debt relief or debt repayment. The Panel may exceptionally approve such payments but not unless the survivor has first obtained appropriate input from an independent source (such as from the Citizens Advice Bureau or a similar debt counselling service), which input is shared with the Panel. The scheme will not cover debts or fines owed to HMRC or other government agencies whether they are owed personally or arising from any business activity carried on by a company or partnership

You can also ask for help to fund professional financial advice to provide assistance in addressing your financial issues.

If you are seeking help for day-to-day living expenses, you will need to provide basic details of your household income and expenditure. A standard form to record income and expenditure of your household will be sent to you to form part of your submission. Applicants need to consider how any request for financial support may affect their status if in receipt of State benefits of any category. An advocate should be able to assist with this, though if uncertain, specialist advice should be taken.

As well as using advocate support, the Support Scheme Office may be able to give advice – you can contact them via SupportScheme@churchofengland.org. It is also possible to submit a self assessment of your needs for review and receive feedback on whether further information is needed. The Support Scheme Office cannot comment on the likelihood of an award being granted; this is not their decision. In order to manage expectations, office staff may however indicate whether a request falls outside the parameters of what the Scheme may support under its legally-binding charitable objects.

The decision panel may, when considering your case, need to come back to you for further information. This is not an indication of the eligibility of your case. This is to ensure that each case is dealt with fairly and equitably, and that the same level of evidence in support of a case is provided on every occasion.

4) What kind of help can I receive?

There is, quite deliberately, no list of what will and will not be funded as applicants’ needs can differ widely. The only matters that will not be funded are those that would be illegal, immoral or inappropriate to fulfill, e.g. payment of Court-imposed fines, business expenses or unlawful activities.

Here are some examples of items that have been funded:

- Various types of therapeutic intervention
- Spiritual retreats or other restorative practice
- Specialist pain therapy
- Disability related costs
- Support to return to gainful employment
- Specialist life skills advice

Please note: Awards can be made for a period of up to six months. This is a staging point, not an end point. Your case can be revisited and reconsidered, and funding for a further six months could be agreed following this review of your progress since first receiving help.

The Scheme aims to be versatile and tries to be responsive to survivor needs. In simple terms, if you have something in mind that may assist your recovery, please ask whether it can be considered.

5) Who makes the decision about whether I will be helped or not?

The decision is made by a Decision Panel that consists of at least three people:

- an independent member
- a Church representative
- a survivor representative.

The panel is chaired by an independent person and supported for advice on the process by a Panel Secretary. On occasion, there may be more than three people on the panel. The panel meetings take place over an online video conferencing platform. Discussions are recorded to ensure an accurate record is taken and will be deleted after 7 days.

Generally, panels consider written submissions only. In exceptional circumstances, a panel may invite advocates and applicants to address the panel directly.

6) How long does the decision process take?

Here are some indicative times for how long each stage can take:

Initial processes to record and manage your application	5-10 working days
Preparation of a survivor needs assessment	This can be as long as you and your advocate need, and the Scheme Office will stay in touch to check progress.
Review of application and resolution of any outstanding queries before presentation to the decision panel	5 working days
Meeting and decision of the panel and verification of decisions taken	10 working days
Notification of decision panel recommendations in your case	5 working days

Once this process is complete, an offer letter will be emailed to you, which will explain the outcome of the Decision Panel.

7) What if I need help very urgently?

If you need help very urgently, emergency funding can be made available while the rest of the process is being managed. To discuss whether you qualify for urgent assistance, you or your advocate can contact SupportScheme@churchofengland.org.

8) How are any funds awarded to me paid?

You will need to inform the Panel Secretary that you accept the award as outlined in the offer letter. You will then need to supply details of the bank account into which you would like the money paid.

9) What if I do not agree with the Decision Panel offer?

Every applicant has a right to appeal the decision of the panel. This can be in relation to any aspect of the offer. You must notify the Support Scheme Office of your wish to appeal within 21 working days of receipt of the offer letter, and then an Appeal Panel will consider your case in accordance with paragraphs 53-58 of the Terms of Reference.

10) What if I think my application has not been handled professionally?

Besides the appeal process – which relates solely to the terms of any offer - there is also a complaint process available to you and your advocate, which relates to customer service. Please explain the nature of your complaint using through SupportScheme@churchofengland.org, and your complaint will then be investigated. The submission of a complaint will not delay any application to the Scheme for assistance.

December 2021