

Survivor Engagement at the National Safeguarding Team – 2022 Annual Report

Survivor engagement is undertaken across the National Safeguarding Team (NST) in many different workstreams and involves colleagues throughout the team. The Partnerships and Engagement Lead, with strategic oversight from Nathalie Ballard (Deputy Director of Partnerships) and administrative support from Chloe Harris, continues to balance the work of ongoing engagement with victims and survivors (in line with the Honorarium Policy) with the needs of project management and staff support.

The survivor engagement team is very grateful to many people and stakeholders involved in this work in the last twelve months. First and foremost, we express gratitude and sincere thanks to 76 individuals with lived experience of abuse who have volunteered and actively supported the work of the National Safeguarding Team in the last year. An increasing number of victims and survivors of abuse have been making valuable contributions to safeguarding improvements and changes and enabling the Church to learn with them.

National survivor engagement

Survivors' voices, experiences and participation have been valuable in the ongoing work and many different initiatives and workstreams across the National Safeguarding Team (NST), including the implementation of IICSA recommendations. In the last year, we reached directly in total 92 individuals through activities, tasks and events, and 69% of them (76) involved in more than one session or engagement activity. Throughout the year, those who have been involved supported a range of areas affecting the lives of other survivors and the wider safeguarding work of the Church. These include :

- Fourteen people with lived experience of abuse involved in two workshops related to Past Cases Review 2 (PCR2) (March).
- Two individual survivors volunteered to help an initiative of training staff members in the digital and communications team on how to respond to disclosure/concerns raised online (October-November).
- Many survivors took part in the 16 Days of Activism “It’s not just black eyes and bruises” to raise awareness of gender-based violence (November-December).
- A good number of survivors took part in wider consultations, such as the revision of the Clergy Conduct Measure (CCM) (12 persons, June) and Lessons Learning Review code of practice (9 persons, December – October).
- Six persons took part in safer recruitment and selection processes for NST staff.

At the end of 2022, survivors continue to volunteer and bring their experiences and wisdom in the following key areas of work:

- Seven committed members constitute the working group which supports the development of the national Redress Scheme with two members of the group representing survivors' views in the project board.
- Three persons with lived experience of abuse are part of the Interim Support Scheme, seating in the assessment panels for those survivors who need immediate and urgent support.
- Six survivors engage with implementation of the Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse guidance as members of the implementation groups (four representatives) and two as supporters in developing visual material and a video related to the guidance.
- Two survivors of church-based abuse are a part of the new Seal of the Confessional working group, and a further six survivors will form the reference group with whom the working group will have a dialogue on the issues arising from its work.
- Four survivors co-facilitate and support the delivery of the Support Person Learning Pathway alongside the National Safeguarding Learning and Development Team.
- Two victim and survivor representatives are part of the Safe Spaces Advisory Committee (SSAC) representing the Church of England.

There is also survivor engagement work planned to commence and run in 2023. This includes new projects, workstreams and consultations (for instance, IICSA Recommendations 1 and 8, Managing Allegations Guidance, National Safeguarding Standards, Redress Scheme survivors consultation, Domestic Abuse working group, co-development of Spiritual abuse awareness video). There will also be further consultation in the Clergy Conduct Measure (CCM) to support the process of reforming the disciplinary measure for clergy and establishing a code of practice. For the survivor engagement work at the NST, we are grateful to the following key partners which have supported our work and the communication with other victims and survivors of abuse, and these include:

- **Survivors Reference Group**
- **Survivors Voices**
- **Support for Survivors**

- **Broken Rites**

Although we cannot estimate the reach of our work through these partnerships, this year, we had the opportunity to enhance the network of partner and collaborators. In August, we met 10 representatives from different survivors' groups and survivors' organisations to brief them about the survivor engagement survey and ensure as many people as possible are aware of the opportunity to share their views (more details below). It was great to see organisations in this area of work taking active steps to inform their groups and service users about the survey.

Also, in November, the newly appointed Director of the NST met with victims and survivors of abuse in two major online meetings organised by the Survivor Engagement Team. Twenty-one victims and survivors and fourteen representatives from twelve survivor groups/organisations attended these meetings, and a small number of individuals who were not able to attend provided written feedback. The meetings were helpful in hearing more important views and feedback which will be incorporated in the existing safeguarding programme and wider work of the NST in implementing IICSA recommendations and developing policy and practice. The meetings highlighted the importance of creating safe spaces for dialogue and knowledge exchange between safeguarding professionals and survivors of any type of abuse on which reciprocal learning and shared responsibilities to improve safeguarding in the Church are recognised.

Development and Implementation of Survivor Engagement Framework

In parallel to ongoing engagement and coproduction work with victims and survivors, the National Safeguarding Team is committed to developing and implementing a survivor engagement framework with victims and survivors. This strategy is endorsed by the National Safeguarding Steering Group (NSSG).. Framework in this context means principles and practices that enable survivors of any form of abuse to have a say and active role in safeguarding changes and improvements.

A national anonymous survey took place in the summer and autumn of 2022, asking survivors how they would like to work with the Church to develop and implement the framework. 179 individuals with lived experience of abuse responded. Comparing the numbers of those who were involved in any way in the NST, this high number of responses indicates that the survey heard from many individuals who have not engaged with the Church previously at national level. It is apparent that there is a learning curve

for all of us in taking on board survivors' voices and views and ensuring their safe, meaningful and impactful participation and coproduction with NST staff members. Learning from the survey will inform a publicly accessible report, which will be published online on the survivor engagement below:

<http://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/survivorengagement..>

Project planning and management has been continuous throughout the year to ensure the appropriate resources and processes are in place to support current and future volunteer survivors. As a result, a range of communication tools have been designed and introduced. In addition to a dedicated webpage in the Church of England's website (which was launched in July), a monthly newsletter has been produced to communicate directly with all volunteer survivors engaging with the NST on developments, progress and opportunities and news regarding engagement. At the end of the year, we had 62 persons registered to receive the newsletter.

Further to this, a new email address has been set up to streamline survivor engagement work and organise the communication with victims and survivors and those interested in the coproduction and engagement work. The email address is:

engage.safeguarding@churchofengland.org. Work is also moving forward to create a platform to securely store the details of individuals who participate and facilitate safe interaction and communication with individual survivors.

Conclusion

In 2022, the National Safeguarding Team is grateful to have worked with many victims and survivors who came forward to volunteer for the Church. Looking ahead, we are aware there is a lot of work to develop the survivor engagement framework and ensure people's engagement in so many workstreams, working groups, projects and initiatives is safe, meaningful and impactful and instils trust. Change happens and will happen in the safeguarding culture of the Church. We want to ensure that victims and survivors abuse are part of these changes and improvements, many of which are driven or supported by the publications of the PCR2 report and IICSA report (October 2022), and in all continuous efforts at the NST to make the Church a safer place for all.

Ioannis Athanasiou - January 2023