

Advocacy to the Interim Support Scheme

The Interim Support Scheme (The Scheme) is a grant awarding scheme for victims and survivors of Church of England abuse who find themselves in urgent need of support. The Scheme is intended to give help and support to survivors whose life circumstances are significantly affected by the abuse suffered, and the response to it. The Scheme is designed to address immediate and urgent needs that help in the short-term.

This leaflet contains information specific to advocacy and the Scheme. Applicants to the Scheme and their advocates should also read the *Questions and Answers document* [iss-f-and-qs-final-oct-23.docx \(live.com\)](#) before applying. This explains the application process and how the Scheme works as this is not covered within this leaflet. Full details of the Scheme can be found within the *Terms of Reference* [iss-tor-v3-october-2023.docx \(live.com\)](#)

What is advocacy?

Advocacy generally means supporting another person to help them express their views and wishes. It involves listening to their views, helping them explore their options and providing them with information to assist them in making informed decisions. Advocates do not give their personal opinions, make decisions for service users or campaign in support of service users.

In the context of the Scheme, it is a process of supporting and enabling Survivors of Church-related abuse to identify their urgent and immediate needs, to gather evidence to support their requests and then present the evidence in a clear way within the Scheme application form.

Advocacy to the Scheme is different to Statutory Advocacy which involves legal entitlement to professional advocates. Advocacy to the Scheme is different to Legal Advocacy and there is not an expectation that the specialist skills and experience of a solicitor are required for advocacy to the Scheme.

How does advocacy to the Interim Support Scheme work?

Survivors of church-related abuse can apply to the Scheme directly or work with an advocate to apply. Applicants do not need to provide reasons why they require advocacy as it is recognised that many survivors of abuse can find contact with the Church to be a difficult and triggering experience due to the nature of their trauma.

The advocate may be engaged by the Survivor and paid by the Survivor from a personal budget supplied from the Scheme for that purpose. Alternatively a Survivor may prefer the Scheme to assist them in finding an advocate and pay them directly. The Scheme will try and support a Survivor's preferences and will signpost them to advocacy services if requested.

Advocacy to the Scheme involves preparing a paper submission to the Scheme with the Survivor, using the Scheme's online application form. An advocate and/or applicant has no right of audience with the Decision Panel but they or the Panel could request this if there are circumstances which require discussion. This is to ensure fairness and consistency in presentation of all cases. It also protects applicants from what can be a triggering experience.

The advocate will be dealing with personal and often very sensitive information and strict adherence to confidentiality must be maintained.

Role of the advocate

An advocate should:

- Listen to an applicant's views and concerns
- Support an applicant to ask all the questions they want to ask and make sure all their points are covered in communication with the Scheme
- Help an applicant understand what the Scheme does and does not do
- Help an applicant explore their options
- Complete the application form and any other required documents on behalf of the applicant
- Provide information to help applicants make informed decisions

Some applications may require advocates to:

- Help an applicant contact relevant people or support organisations, or contact them on their behalf
- Accompany an applicant and support them in any meetings or appointments.

An advocate should not:

- Give their personal opinions and advice
- Solve problems and make decisions for an applicant
- Make judgements about an applicant
- Request support which the applicant is not requesting
- Campaign on behalf of the applicant
- Provide counselling or other support services outside of advocacy

An important part of the advocacy role is to manage expectations. The Scheme is a grant giving Scheme for Survivors in crisis. The scheme is not redress, or compensation for perceived past losses and disadvantages. The Scheme does not provide open-ended support or provide a financial holding position for Survivors pursuing a Civil claim or wishing to apply to the Redress Scheme in future. It is important the advocate is able to explain this to a survivor so they are making informed decisions understanding what the Scheme does and does not do.

Qualifications suitable for advocacy

A professional advocate has training and experience to undertake their role. However the Scheme recognises that some survivors would prefer a friend or family member to assist them with their application and so the Scheme allows for this wherever possible in order to make the Scheme accessible for all eligible survivors.

Whilst the use of an advocate is at the personal discretion of the survivor, survivors are advised to use an advocate who has relevant skills and experience. They should have good communication skills with a range of people and be able to research information and understand the process of applying to the Scheme. They should be able to stand up and challenge decisions and be able to understand

the Scheme's Terms of Reference and complete the necessary paperwork. They should be able to support an applicant to gather the information and evidence required for their application.

Support organisations or representatives from them can act as or can provide advocacy. Organisations such as Victim Support, Safe Spaces, MACSAS, Survivors Voices, Replenish, NAPAC and The Survivors Trust are examples of such organisations though there are other local and national organisations that can help. These organisations already provide advocacy to Victims and Survivors and understand how advocacy works.

Independent advocates who do not have a family or friendship relationship with the survivor are expected to hold professional liability and indemnity insurance related to the quality of their work.

The Survivor – Advocate Relationship

It is important that the survivor trusts the advocate to present their case truthfully and appropriately. In particular, the advocate must ensure that the Survivor's application form relates to urgent and immediate needs for short-term support not to historic matters that relate to compensation or redress for abuse suffered or long-term support.

In communicating with the Scheme, the advocate must ensure that they are speaking for the survivor, copying the survivor into correspondence as appropriate. The advocate should not take actions that disempower the survivor or disadvantage the survivor's application.

The survivor has the right to end their working relationship if they no longer wish to continue the advocacy arrangement.

It is envisaged that communications with the scheme will usually be via the advocate and it is the advocate's responsibility to ensure that the means and timing of communications with the survivor are comfortable, safe, and respectful of that survivor's needs and boundaries and that any special needs or requirements are accommodated.

The Application Form

There must be sufficient evidence provided to fulfil the scheme's eligibility criteria for applicants. All requests for help must be evidenced with clear information to support the request and why it is an urgent and immediate need.

If temporary help with day-to-day living costs is requested, a detailed breakdown of the household income and expenditure must be provided alongside an outline of any savings held, future expected income and the survivor's plans to take steps towards a financially stable position. There is an existing pro-forma for this.

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 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; and

Whenever possible, actual, or appropriately estimated costs of requests should be supplied.

If requesting therapeutic support, the application should specify why the Survivor is not accessing therapy via the Diocese who are able to provide this under the Church's Responding Well Practice Guidance. There should be evidence available of the need from a qualified and accredited practitioner. This could be the survivor's GP, Counsellor, Psychotherapist or a Psychiatrist. It is not envisioned that the Scheme will support with private health or mental health services because these services are provided through the NHS. Where this is not possible, the reasons need to be evident within the application form.

There is no generic list of what will and will not be supported by the scheme. The only specific exclusion is that the scheme will only fund matters that are legal, moral, and ethical.

If, in the view of the decision panel, the needs assessment fails to appropriately evidence the need or provide sufficient detail to make a fair decision, the application can be deferred for further information to be provided. If an advocate is unsure as to the adequacy of evidence for a particular request, advice can be sought from the Support Scheme office. However, the eligibility of an applicant and the adequacy of the evidence is ultimately decided by the Decision Panel not the office staff.

Funding for Advocacy

Funding is available up to a maximum daily rate of £250 or hourly equivalent and reasonable and evidenced expenses. If the case is referred for additional work, additional advocacy funding will be provided. The maximum single application funding available is £2,000, payable against invoice and inclusive of VAT or other service charges.

In exceptional circumstances, the panel may approve further costs up to a total limit of £4000. This tends to be reserved for applicants who have complex disabilities or difficulties communicating, complex financial situations or other reasons why their application took much longer to prepare.

Payment for advocacy is authorised against the provision of an invoice which includes a breakdown of work and time. Funds will not be released until the decision panel processes are completed to the Scheme and the survivor's satisfaction.

Ongoing Survivor – Advocate Relationship

The Scheme provides funds for up to a 12 month period. The survivor may request further funding towards the end of the period. The new application will need to show how the needs are changing/what plans are in place to move towards a sustainable position given the support cannot be open-ended. The survivor may use the same advocate or engage a different advocate, additional funding will be made available to facilitate either choice. The Scheme does not provide funding for additional advocate contact with the survivor outside the remit of the preparation of the application and presentation to the decision panel. It is for the advocate to manage their professional relationship with the survivor.