

Survivor Engagement – 2023 Annual Report

Engaging with victims and survivors and learning from their views and experiences are essential to the Church’s safeguarding work. This report provides an overview of the areas that victims and survivors were involved in, during 2023 with links with further information.

The report is divided into 4 sections:

1. Overview: an overview of survivor engagement work at a national level
2. The ways by which victims and survivors have engaged
3. The development areas and workstreams in which victims and survivors have participated in
4. The Future: the plans to develop a framework of principles and processes that will guide survivors’ engagement in the Church of England

Overview

In the last year, 103 victims and survivors engaged with the National Safeguarding Team (NST) through different interactions. Interactions in this context mean any contact made by survivors with the purpose of information, participation, and volunteering, such as receiving newsletters, undertaking activities, attending groups, events, and information meetings. Table 1 shows the details of the overall engagement.

TABLE 1: 2023 data	People
Survivors who engaged with the work of the NST	103
Active participants in 2023	65
Interactions made by 65 active participants	152
Newsletter recipients at the end of 2023 (including 8 survivors groups/organisations reps.)	75
Withdrawals from engagement	5
Survivors who started an online anonymous survey	143
Survivors who completed an online anonymous survey	82
Active participants at the start of 2024	38

The overall engagement increased by 12% from 2022 (103 participants compared to 92 participants). The data shows our work reaches high numbers of victims and survivors. 143 individuals were approached through two online anonymous surveys in 2023 (111 for the Redress Scheme and 32 for the Seal of Confessional).

The journey to engage with the NST, for some survivors, starts by consenting to receive the monthly survivor engagement newsletter¹. The newsletter shares NST updates, safeguarding developments in the Church, engagement opportunities and events. In December 2022 there were 60 subscribers which increased to 75 subscribers by December 2023. Only 5 have chosen to unsubscribe from the newsletter during the year.

Of the 75 who have received the newsletter in 2023, 67 are registered as individuals and 8 as representatives of other relevant groups or organisations. 33 people (half of these 67 individuals) received the newsletter without engaging in any other activity.

15 survivors engaged with the NST without subscribing to the newsletter. This suggests the open approach, requesting that engagement opportunities are shared to dioceses and cathedrals through partnered groups/organisations is a positive method of sharing engagement opportunities.

¹ Details on how someone can register to receive the newsletter can be found on the Church of England’s webpage on survivor engagement: [Survivor engagement | The Church of England](#)

The ways by which victims and survivors engage

We know from the survivor engagement report² that there is a wide variety in the method by which survivors want to engage with the Church. This is reflected in this year's engagement methods:

TABLE 2: Methods of interaction	% engagement
Anonymous survey	36.3
Groups	26.5
Training	8.8
Emails	8
Media production, i.e. videos	6.2
Staff recruitment	4
Panels	3.1
Workshops	2.7
Written responses	1.3

The data suggests many survivors prefer to engage with the NST anonymously (the easiest way to facilitate that is through online surveys), and slightly fewer prefer to be involved with ongoing groups (mainly online or in-person). However, attention is required to better explore the effectiveness of online surveys as a method of engagement. As noted in table 1, although a high number of people start an online survey, some do not answer all questions or do not complete the whole survey.

Training programmes are the next most popular method of engagement, followed by creating media resources for training and awareness-raising. It is also interesting to note that participation in recruitment processes is valued; a hugely important part of survivor engagement, ensuring survivors have a voice and input when recruiting relevant staff. It must be noted that methods of engagement are always tailored to different aims and objectives as well as to survivors' possible needs and expectations.

The development areas and workstreams in which victims and survivors engaged or engage

Victims and survivors' lived experience, knowledge and perspectives have been incredibly valuable in the workstreams, projects and businesses of the NST, including those within the [Safeguarding Programme](#), which monitors the implementation of IICSA³ recommendations. Victims and survivors have been involved in many aspects of safeguarding work, over seven broad areas:

1. Co-developing or delivering service provision for victims and survivors.

A high number of survivors were involved in schemes and services responding to the restorative and support needs of victims and survivors.

In 2023, the Redress Survivor Working Group played a vital role in helping to shape and design the **National Redress Scheme**. This dedicated group of seven people provided invaluable insight and survivor perspectives, with two members directly representing survivors on the Scheme's Project Board. Beyond the core Working Group, members also contributed through subgroups focused on specific areas (communications and procurement) and participated in recruitment processes. To further capture the breadth of survivor experiences and thoughts about the Redress Scheme, a survivor consultation survey was conducted, gathering responses from 57 individuals, and receiving partial responses from 54 others. Equally important has been the 9 volunteers who were involved in the **Interim Support Scheme**. Three of them are regularly part of the scheme's decision-making panels, assessing applications of victims and

² Published in October 2023, the report can be accessed here:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/survivor-engagement-survey-report.pdf>

³ IICSA: Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse

survivors in immediate and urgent need. A further 6 people provided valuable feedback on the revision of key processes of the Scheme last Autumn (web-based application and evaluation forms).

Also, the **Safe Spaces** Advisory Committee (SSAC) has 2 survivors representing the Church of England. It was positive to see First Light, the provider of [Safe Spaces](#), involving 7 survivors in staff recruitment and training. They also surveyed 25 survivors about co-developing peer-to-peer support provision.

2. National safeguarding policy development and awareness raising

A considerable number of victims and survivors took part in the development of safeguarding policy. In more detail, early in 2023, the Development Team engaged 2 survivors at the final stages of the **Safeguarding Practice Review Code of Practice**, following the consultation with 9 survivors in 2022.

Participation was also good in the implementation of the [“Responding Well Guidance to Victims and Survivors of Abuse”](#) guidance. 10 survivors overall supported the implementation of this key guidance for victims and survivors in the Church, including 4 people who acted as members of the Implementation Group and 6 survivors who engaged in co-producing [a series of short videos](#) raising awareness of the support that victims and survivors of abuse are entitled to under the guidance. The members of the Implementation Group and 2 of the 6 other survivors were also involved in developing [an easy-read version of the guidance](#), with the aim of increasing accessibility and raising awareness about the different support options available to victims and survivors of church-related abuse.

In October 2023, a major consultation was launched on the **Safeguarding Code of Practice on Managing Safeguarding Concerns and Allegations**, as well as the revised Safeguarding (Clergy Risk Assessment) Regulations. 3 survivors were involved in the development of the Code of Practice from the start (2 remain involved at the time of the report) and played a key role in co-facilitating further engagement with survivors. An additional 11 survivors expressed an interest in the consultation, 5 of whom submitted written feedback and 6 attended workshops for verbal feedback as part of the consultation (some survivors did both). Survivors’ engagement in this work will conclude by the end of January 2024.

In addition to the above, 2 new members joined the **Spiritual Abuse working group** which is producing a short video to raise awareness around spiritual abuse and help people understand what the term spiritual abuse means.

3. Intersection of safeguarding with theology and faith

41 people engaged in the discussions about the [Seal of Confessional](#). This included a reference group of 9 survivors, 2 of whom attend the main working group, which have met regularly throughout the year. In addition, 32 people responded to an online survey consultation produced by the group, the results of which will contribute to the final report which will be presented to the House of Bishops.

Furthermore, 5 people have taken part in the **Theology and Safeguarding Group** which aims to shape a theological underpinning to current understanding and practice of safeguarding in the Church. The group includes survivors, church officers and NST staff.

4. Safeguarding training, learning and development

A good number of survivors worked alongside the National Safeguarding Learning and Development Team in several initiatives. 7 people co-developed and co-delivered training, development and learning to safeguarding advisors, clergy and lay professionals in dioceses and cathedrals. The training was about **forgiveness, co-production, trauma-informed practice, pastoral principles for safeguarding**.

Further to this, 5 people engaged in the revision of the **Support Person Learning Pathway**, with 3 of those also co-delivering the pathway. Also, 3 people reviewed the **Domestic Abuse training** as part of the relevant working group. It was also important to enable 2 survivors to take part in a session in relation to the next iteration of the **Senior Leadership Safeguarding Pathway**.

5. Contributing to consistency and quality of] Diocesan and National Safeguarding Practice

16 people engaged in the [IICSA 1&8 Project](#) which supports the transition of the safeguarding arrangements in dioceses to enhance the quality of safeguarding practice in the Church. An open session provided a space for 6 survivors to share their views on the change from Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor to an Officer role (IICSA recommendation 1).

Survivor engagement was also vital in preparing the Church for **independent safeguarding audit programme**. 7 people involved in the consultation and procurement process to identify the provider who will deliver independent audits of Church bodies in 2024. A further 2 plan to be in the Audit Programme Monitoring Group which will monitor the delivery of independent external audits of dioceses and cathedrals across the Church.

15 people engaged in the consultation of the [National Safeguarding Standards](#) and Quality Assurance Framework. **The National Safeguarding Standards** define 'what good safeguarding arrangements look like in the Church of England' and align with a quality assurance framework to ensure their implementation through the audits.

6. Speaking out in forums, spaces of dialogue, and knowledge exchange

This year, we enabled two survivors to take part in the **General Synod** in July discussing the need for a Redress Scheme for victims and survivors. We have continued to provide a confidential online space for survivors to share and discuss their concerns and critical thoughts during General Synod proceedings.

Additionally, open forums with victims and survivors were standardised in the work of the Church. It was the first year we enabled 16 victims, survivors, survivors' advocates, and organisation representatives to engage with members of the **Archbishop Council** in July.

The NST has an established practise to organise **forums** every six months in which the Lead Bishop for Safeguarding and the National Director of Safeguarding directly listen to victims and survivors. In 2023 four forum meetings took place in May and November. and In each month, there was a meeting for victims and survivors as individuals and another for advocates and representatives of survivor's groups and support organisations. In total, 31 survivors and 10 representatives attended these events.

7. Partnerships and Collaboration with survivors' groups and organisations

The NST is grateful to the following key partners which have supported and shared our engagement opportunities with victims and survivors. These include:

- Survivors Reference Group
- Survivors Voices
- House of Survivors
- Broken Rites
- MACSAS
- Replenished Life
- Fear-free
- First Light
- IDAS
- Support for Survivors
- Champions for Change

The network of partners and collaborators grew this year, as in 2022 the NST liaised closely with only 4 groups.

Future

Most projects and workstreams are ongoing, with further engagement opportunities planned. More feedback from the consultation on **Managing Allegations** is due over the next weeks. Further consultation is also planned this year to seek the views of survivors on the revision of **Clergy Conduct Measure (CCM)**.

The NST is committed to co-develop with victims and survivors a **Survivor Engagement National Framework** by September 2024. The framework will outline how victims and survivors are heard and participate in the development of safeguarding work in the Church of England. It is widely understood that the quality and methods of survivor engagement vary across England, and that a guiding framework is overdue. The results of the survivor engagement survey, published in October 2023, showed that victims and survivors of abuse want to feel safe and welcomed, able to influence change and see the impact of their engagement in the life of the Church.

To this end, an action plan is in place to establish four task-and-finish groups focusing on Co-production, Inclusivity, Safety, and Impact (these areas came out of the 2022 survey and conversations with survivors and NST staff members) to finalise the Framework in the next months.

Conclusion

The quantity of the information in this report does not replace the quality that survivors' views, stories and contributions bring to help others, to prevent abuse and make the Church a safer place. The NST has been flexible and sensitive to provide carefully planned spaces and opportunities for victims and survivors to engage in a variety of areas within and outside the team (Archbishops Council, General Synod). We are sincerely grateful to 103 victims and survivors of abuse who had the courage, aspiration, and time to become part of any aspect of our work last year.

It is hard to quantify the impact of survivor engagement in the safeguarding policy and practice in the Church. However, engagement numbers increased during 2023, and indeed 38 people have already engaged with the NST in 2024. This report evidences that this work reaches more survivors than those who actively participate and the number of withdrawals remains low. We are more committed to create more space and opportunities for victims and survivors, while keeping the wider Church informed of the value survivor engagement adds to safeguarding work.

The creation of the Survivor Engagement Framework in 2024 presents a unique opportunity to engage with victims and survivors⁴ to make survivor engagement more meaningful, inclusive, trauma-informed, and impactful. This means victims and survivors, particularly those of marginalised groups and communities, can safely engage in the safeguarding developments, changes and improvements in the Church.

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⁴ For more information about survivor engagement in the Church of England, please visit this webpage: [Survivor engagement | The Church of England](#)