**Frequently Asked Questions**

The Support 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 provide short-term help to address immediate and urgent needs.

The following questions have been developed to assist you with an application to the Scheme.

**What does ‘Interim’ mean?**

The full title of the Scheme is ‘Interim Support Scheme.’ The scheme is designed to provide short-term help which is required because of an unforeseen issue which has led to a crisis. The Scheme aims to provide support that is needed to enable you to get past the crisis and gain some stability. The Scheme is an interim solution to avoid either a substantial risk to your mental or physical health or a substantial risk that you will be unable to conduct normal day-to-day activities. Longer-term support and solutions will not be part of the Scheme.

**How does the Interim Support Scheme relate to the future Redress Scheme?**

The Scheme was set up to support survivors of Church of England abuse who find themselves in urgent need of support it is not a scheme that offers any form of compensation to survivors for harm caused.

Redress is about restitution and restoration and the purpose of the National Redress Scheme is to demonstrate in tangible and practical ways that the Church is truly sorry for its past failings relating to safeguarding.

The Scheme has a set of terms and criteria that are different to any future Redress Scheme, which is being developed independently of the Scheme. An applicant that is eligible to apply to this Scheme, may not be eligible to apply for redress, for example.

More information can be found here: [Redress Scheme | The Church of England](https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/redress-scheme)

**Am I eligible for the Support Scheme?**

The following will assist you in establishing if you are eligible for the Scheme:

1. You are a victim or survivor of Church of England abuse, and the abuser was a member of clergy, a church officer, church employee or any other official Church Officer (e.g.., volunteer).
2. The abuse you suffered can include, physical, sexual, emotional, spiritual, and financial.
3. You need immediate support to avoid a substantial risk to your mental or physical health or a substantial risk you will be unable to conduct day to day activities.
4. The support requested is not available from any other source e.g., via Universal Credit or from any other form of state benefit or support.

The current need results from the Church abuse you suffered.

**How do I clarify with you that I am eligible for the Scheme?**

* You will need you to provide some basic information about the abuse you have suffered and if this has been reported to someone in the Church or any other statutory authority.
* If you have reported your abuse, we will agree with you how we can obtain the relevant information, this will usually be through a discussion with the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer of the diocese where the abuse took place.
* If your allegation has not previously been reported, the Scheme have an obligation to report it- under the Church of England safeguarding policy. This will be progressed with care, and we will discuss this with you.

**What type of support can I apply for?**

The Scheme can provide the following types of support:

**Therapeutic support**

Therapeutic provision is usually provided locally through the diocese to meet your immediate and medium-term needs.

Where you are not able to access therapy through the Diocese, the scheme may be able to provide financial support to enable you to access therapeutic services.

The Scheme has a cap on the cost of therapeutic support, which is normally £100 (excluding VAT) per session.

The Scheme can provide up to twelve months of support at a time.

**Financial support**

The Scheme can provide financial support in a range of different ways to address your immediate needs and in times of unforeseen or unexpected costs.

This could be for a specific item which could include for example, the replacement of a household appliance or by providing financial support for general living expenses.

Financial support associated with ongoing living expenses can be considered and is designed to help in times of financial difficulty, which has come about because of the abuse you have suffered. To qualify for temporary financial support and help with day-to-day living costs we will require a detailed breakdown of your household income and expenditure alongside an outline of any savings held, future expected income and your plans to take steps towards a financially stable position.

An income and expenditure spreadsheet are available to assist you with collating this information.

**Emergency funding**

Our emergency funding is designed to help in times of unforeseen crisis and where the following criteria applies.

* there is a substantial risk of harm to the applicant by waiting until the next panel meeting
* there is no other available source of help available
* the request meets the [Support Principles](https://www.churchofengland.org/media/34698)
* the request does not exceed £2500

Emergency requests will usually take about seven working days to process.

**Can you help with debts?**

The Scheme will not ordinarily be able to assist with any kind of debt relief or debts, however they may be able to assist with providing support with financial advice.

**Who makes the decisions regarding my application?**

The decision is made by a Decision Panel that consists of at least three people: - an independent member, a Church representative, and a survivor representative. On occasions, there may be more than three people on the panel.

The panel is chaired by an independent person and supported for advice on the process by a Panel Secretary who is a member of the National Safeguarding Team.

The panel meetings take place via an online video conferencing platform.

**Can I get help with my application?**

You may want to consider the use of an advocate to assist with your application. If so, the Scheme have financial support available for you to be able to use an advocate. This person can be a professional advocate (we can help you to identify someone if you wish) or a family member or friend who you think will have the appropriate skills.

We can provide more information on the role of an advocate and have an Advocacy Leaflet. If you do decide to use an advocate, the person you have appointed will also be sent the advocacy leaflet, so that they have information about the role.

**How long will I wait for a decision in relation to my application?**

We aim to respond to each application promptly, and process applications in a timely manner.

The following is an outline of the steps of your application:

* Acknowledgement of receipt of your application
* Responding to you or your advocate for clarification as necessary, to ensure the application meets the Terms of Reference of the Scheme.
* Preparing paperwork to present to the decision-making Panel members.
* Panel meet and your application is considered.
* The decisions of Panel are recorded and checked.
* An panel decision letter will be sent out to you, and you are asked to review and accept the offer for payments to be released.

Every application is unique; however, the application process usually takes around four weeks in total but can take longer (for example if you or your advocate need more time to provide the required information).

If your application is for Emergency funding, please make this clear on your application and your request will be prioritised and we aim to process this within seven working days.

**When and how will the payment be made?**

If your application is successful, you will receive an outcome notification in an Panel decision letter. If there are no conditions attached, the award will be paid into your bank account within 2-3 working days of you accepting the offer.

In the case of larger financial grants, the Scheme may spread payments throughout a twelve-month period. This will be explained in your panel decision letter.

**Do I have to provide receipts for items?**

Yes. We ordinarily ask for receipts for individual items, and invoices for services or items as appropriate. The panel decision letter will be specific when you are required to provide receipts.

You can provide copies of the receipts electronically or via mail, whichever is easiest for you.

An application for financial support for general living expenses will require you to provide a completed income and expenses form (which we will provide for you). This form will require a detailed breakdown of your household income and expenditure as well as any savings you may have. You will be asked to provide evidence to support this form, i.e., a copy of an energy or council tax bill.

**Are there any restrictions on how I use the financial support?**

If your application is successful, the panel decision letter you receive will explain what the financial support is for.

When money has been awarded for specific items, you will sometimes be required to provide receipts on how the money was spent for our audit purposes as we are supported by charitable funds.

**Is there a limit to what I can apply for?**

The Scheme has a number of criteria and limitations. It is set up to support people in the short term, to ease a crisis.

Specifically, you can apply for up to twelve months of support at a time.

There is also a financial limit to the support that can be offered for therapy.

* In most circumstances therapeutic support is capped at a maximum of £100 per session (exclusive of VAT).
* Individual items and living costs will be considered in each case based on reasonable need with consideration to the minimum income standards ([A Minimum Income Standard for the United Kingdom in 2023 | JRF](https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/minimum-income-standard-uk-2023)).
* Items which fall outside what might be considered lawful or morally justifiable will not be provided.

**Do I have to apply online?**

The application process includes an online application form, which needs to be completed for the Scheme to receive your application. If either yourself or your advocate are not comfortable completing the online form, or have queries, please make contact with office staff, who will be pleased to assist you.

**What if I am declined the support for which I am applying?**

The panel may decide to agree to fund all items within your application, part of the application, seek further information before deciding, or decline to support all items within your application.

* If items within your application are declined by the decision-making panel, then office staff might be able to signpost you to alternative means of support from other agencies.
* If you wish to challenge any decision made by the decision-making panel, then you can appeal the decision by contacting the office, who will advise you of the process of appealing the decision. There is a timeframe of 28 days to inform the Scheme of your wish to Appeal.

**How do I speak to someone at the Scheme?**

The Scheme staff can be contacted by email at supportscheme@churchofengland.org.

The Mailbox is monitored Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm.

**If someone is in immediate danger or needs urgent medical attention, call 999.**

The following link gives information on how to report a new Safeguarding concerns and other support services that are available [Reporting abuse and finding support | The Church of England](https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/reporting-abuse)

**Feeding back to the ISS? How do I comment, complain, or provide other forms of feedback to the Scheme?**

We would like to hear your feedback and experience of the Scheme. If you would like to provide feedback, you can request a feedback form from, supportscheme@churchofengland.org

If you would like complain about the actions of an employee of the National Church Institute you can do so under the NCI Service Complaints Policy complaints policy and procedure can be accessed here <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2023-01/NCI_Service_Complaints_Policy_v3.pdf>

Please note that decisions made by the decision-making Panel are outside the scope of this policy.