



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

The Church of England National Survivor Participation Framework

2024

Introduction

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What is the framework?

This strategic framework is a guide for any Church body and any victim or survivor who participates or wants to participate in making safeguarding changes in the Church of England. It was coproduced with victims and survivors in 2024.

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Why does it matter?

Victims and survivors have a unique perspective which can inform us about what, how, and when we make changes and improvements that keep everyone safe in the Church. This framework recognises victims and survivors as experts by experience and active participants in Church's safeguarding work. This is in line with the [National Safeguarding Standard 4.1 of the Quality Assurance Framework](#), which is used in independent safeguarding audits of dioceses and cathedrals, ensuring that survivor participation practices are both good and consistent.

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What is included in this document?

1. Terminology, and the main types of participation used
2. Principles of enabling victims and survivors to be part of the safeguarding work of the Church
3. Guidance on how to achieve these principles
4. Signposts to further advice, policies, and resources.



Terminology

The terms '*survivor*' and '*victim*' are labels and carry limitations. Both words do not capture all personal experiences. Some people want to use different words or phrases to describe their experiences, while others do not want an episode or series of episodes to define their lives or their identity. People have the right to describe their experiences in a way which is most comfortable and appropriate for them. The framework uses these words to refer to individuals who have been subject to abuse (House of Bishops Glossary Reference Guide 2017:12).

Church officer is anyone who has been appointed/elected by or on behalf of the Church of England to a post or role, whether they are ordained or lay, paid or unpaid.

Responsible church officer (RCO) in this document means any church officer who is responsible for organising or facilitating survivor participation activities and/or is the main church contact for victims and survivors.

A glossary of other terms used in this document can be found at the end of this document.

Main Methods of Participation

<i>Type</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>How it works in practice</i>	<i>Decision making</i>
Coproduction	An equal partnership with victims and survivors of any form of abuse, who work together to influence support services received by them ¹ and/or any safeguarding activity and improvement that aim to keep all people safe in the Church.	A safeguarding activity, project or initiative is decided from the outset with survivors, church officers and any other external expert involved. Everyone's input has the same value, and victims and survivors are involved throughout the process, from conception, through design to delivery.	All decisions are made jointly and shared equally with survivors
Co-design	An equal partnership with victims and survivors of any form of abuse, who work together to design and develop safeguarding improvements and services received by them, and/or any safeguarding activity and improvement that aim to keep all people safe in the Church.	Victims and survivors as well as other external experts are involved in designing a safeguarding activity, project or initiative, based on their experiences, expertise and knowledge. They have genuine influence without being involved in 'seeing it through'.	Decision making is shared equally from the outset up to the final design, not the delivery.
Engagement	Working together with victims and survivors of any form of abuse in safeguarding activities and improvements that are defined by the Church and aim to keep all people safe.	A Church body decides on the outcome of an activity, project or initiative and uses various ways to enable victims and survivors to share their views in the design and development. Whether survivors' views inform the decisions depends on the church officers and the church body responsible for the activity.	Some decision-making opportunities are shared in the development, but the Church makes the decision.
Consultation	Asking victims and survivors of any form of abuse for their opinions in safeguarding activities and improvements that are defined by the Church and aim to keep all people safe.	A church body or officer decides on the outcome of a safeguarding activity, project or initiative and uses various ways to gather information by inviting survivors to fill in surveys or attend meetings to say which proposal they prefer or what they think about an issue. The responsible church officer or body draws conclusions and make decisions based on the outcome of consultation.	Decision making is not shared.

Principles

The following six principles aim to enable Church bodies and church officers who want to actively and well involve victims and survivors in the safeguarding work of the Church:

1. **Creating meaningful and person-centred participation for victims and survivors in safeguarding in ways that prevents further harm and re-traumatisation.**
2. **Enabling well-informed choices for individuals when considering whether to participate and throughout their involvement.**
3. **Facilitating inclusive spaces where there is not 'us and them', where all individuals and opinions are respected and treated equally.**
4. **Ensuring that all voices and experiences of victims and survivors can be heard and influence safeguarding development decisions.**
5. **Using task-focused approaches that deliver outcomes and make an impact on keeping people safe.**
6. **Committing to appropriately resourced, open, transparent and ongoing survivor participation in safeguarding.**

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Creating meaningful and person-centred coproduction with victims and survivors in ways that prevent further harm and re-traumatisation

Confidentiality

- All information shared in survivor participation activities will be kept confidential unless specific consent is given to share it.
- We will only breach confidentiality when there is significant risk of harm to an individual, or others.
- Victims and survivors will have to give a small amount of personal data (name, contact details, format of communication, contact times, diocese)
- Victims and survivors' data will be processed and kept according to [UK-GDPR](#). This will also apply to keeping records and taking notes.
- Victims and survivors, including those entitled by law to protect their anonymity, can participate anonymously.
- A privacy notice will always be in place to explain data protection arrangements.
- Privacy notice and any forms used in line with them (group confidentiality agreement form, for example) will be reviewed and updated regularly.



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Creating meaningful and person-centred participation, preventing harm and re-traumatisation

Safe spaces

- It is vital to have a trauma-informed, caring and person-centred approach to support everyone's wellbeing and autonomy.
- The RSO will offer an open conversation at the start of a victim or survivor's participation to discuss their wellbeing, the support they have, if there are conflicts of interest, and if they need any special requirements. This can be written as a Personal Participation Plan.
- Individuals will never be asked to share their lived experiences; however, when and if they choose to speak about their lived experiences and stories, they will be given space with empathy, compassion and gratitude for their trust to share.
- Activities can cause emotional strain. RCOs will try to balance this by enabling victims and survivors to see the change they are making.
- Details of helplines and services (including peer support spaces) should always be available. The RCO can offer follow up calls or meetings for victims and survivors after a distressing or triggering experience.
- Clear boundaries between victims and survivors and church officers will be created and maintained to enable trusting relationships and protection for all.
- Survivors, church officers, and other stakeholders involved in participation are expected to behave with kindness and respect of others. Anyone who demonstrates any kind of abusive behaviour will be asked to leave. The RCO will follow up afterwards.
- Safeguarding policies will be rigorously followed whenever needed.

Resources

[Risk Assessment Guidelines](#)

[Responding Well Guidelines](#)

Personal Participation Plan (under development)

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Enabling well-informed choices for individuals when considering whether to participate and throughout their participation.

Choice

- Each victim or survivor has the right to decide which activities they participate in. This includes the choice not to join an activity, or to stop participating. The RCO will ensure that victims and survivors understand these rights.

-- Unexpected things can impact a persons' situation and their availability to take part or commit to an activity, such as work commitments, illness, homelife, etc. If this happens, the RCO will prioritise everyone's wellbeing.

- Before deciding to participate, each survivor should have access to relevant information to make informed choices.

Information

Relevant information that helps survivors to decide should include, but is not limited to:

Activity: history of the activity or group, what the activity is, the time commitment, who will be involved, method of participation, and how decisions are made, groups' terms of reference if existed

Support: how to access internal and external support

Data protection: privacy notice (where data is held) and confidentiality agreements (how data is used) in activities and groups

Practicalities: agendas, reminders, key contacts, timeframe, relevant documents (eg honorarium, Responding Well), and ways of acknowledgment

Safety: overnight stays, comprehensive documents to review, etc.



Enabling well-informed choices for individuals when considering whether to participate and throughout their engagement

Communication

- RCOs will ask survivors when they prefer to receive information and keep to these preferences.
- Communication channels will use accessible and appropriate language in plain English, and as far as possible be offered in a wide range of accessible formats and languages. This should include asking people to request information in their preferred formats and/or adding explanatory notes of church and safeguarding-related language.
- An easily contactable person will be available throughout their participation.
- The RCO will try to respond to victims and survivors in 3 working days and will tell them if they need more time to respond expect occasions that a safeguarding risk arises, when the RCO will respond as soon as possible.
- With victims' and survivors' consent, we will make use of clear written notes in groups and meetings, to help good communication, progress and completion of activities.
- Survivors will be kept updated throughout their involvement through church's communication channels (i.e. website, newsletter) and the RCOs. This also includes providing clear lines of communication if an individual wants to raise a concern or complaint.

Resources

- [Privacy notice](#)
- [Expenses and honorarium policy](#)

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Facilitating inclusive spaces, where there is not ‘us and them’, where all individuals and opinions are respected and treated equally.

Accessibility and inclusion

- Equality and diversity will be the basis of any participation activity with victims and survivors in safeguarding.
- RCOs will include individuals with a broad spectrum of lived experiences and disabilities (including invisible) and pay attention to protected characteristics
- Whoever runs the participation activity will embrace diverse experiences, faith, and identities. Victims and survivors who have lost, changed, or kept their faith have equal space.
- Reasonable adjustments will be promoted and provided to make everyone’s involvement easier.
- RCOs will use Assistive Technology where possible.
- Maintaining mutual respect takes time, effort, and good facilitation, especially when disagreements and different opinions deserve space, time, attention, and consensus.
- RCOs commit to valuing each person's dignity and the unique voice of each survivor throughout their participation.



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Facilitating inclusive spaces, where there is not 'us and them', where all individuals and opinions are respected and treated equally.

Recruitment

- A culture of volunteering will form the basis of all survivor participation activities and groups.
- No church officer will act in a way that implies or could be legally interpreted as giving the victim or survivor employee status (i.e. use of contract, offering fees, loss of earnings, etc.).
- There will be different ways of participation (online, in-person, and hybrid), so every individual can equally contribute.
- Opportunities to take part or learn about participation will be communicated in a variety of ways (emails, newsletters, HR systems, survivors' groups and organisations) to ensure as many victims and survivors as possible hear about them.
- It is important to hear from a diverse group of people and stakeholders and ensure geographical variance.
- Existing recruitment processes and systems will be used for long-term survivor participation activities, groups, and developments that take more than six months.
- For survivor participation activities that will last less than six months, church bodies can follow NST's suggested processes.

Children and Young People's Participation

- RCOs should tailor activities to involve children and young people until age 25 where needed. It is important to hear their perspective as it will differ from adults.
- Professionals trained in relevant subject areas should only be allowed to work with them.
- Parents/guardians must provide their consent before and throughout participation and promote the child's voice. Where consent is not possible, RCOs will seek advice from the line manager or senior manager.
- The wellbeing, and diversity of children will be prioritised. If a safeguarding referral is necessary, parental consent will be sought except when legislation advises differently
- Data protection arrangements will be tailored to them.

Resources

- [National recruitment guidance for long term participation](#)
- [Suggested recruitment guidance for short term participation](#)
- [Equality Act 2010](#)

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Ensuring that all voices of victims and survivors can be heard and influence safeguarding development decisions

Empowerment

- Victims and survivors will be empowered to use their voice.
- Survivors can see gaps and problems in safeguarding policies and practices. Their wisdom and knowledge about what needs to change will be valued and carry great weight in safeguarding development decisions, particularly in decisions that affect the lives of other victims and survivors.
- RSOs will be clear about what type of participation they are offering and how decisions will be made before survivors commit to activities and throughout their involvement.
- RCOs will always listen to victims and survivors, without judgement.
- Good facilitation of activities will enable meaningful and genuine dialogue.
- RCOs will be flexible to run activities and events outside of working hours, online and in person. There will also be care and spaces for those who are not confident using information and technology systems.



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Ensuring that all voices of victims and survivors can be heard and can influence safeguarding development decisions

Representation and Equity

- No individual survivor or group represents all victims and survivors.
- RCOs will make every effort to hear from as many victims and survivors as possible. They will consider survivors' different lived experiences and types of abuse and their varied needs.
- Anonymous surveys and partnerships with survivors' groups and organisations are also other ways to hear as many voices as possible.
- Projects and initiatives that prevent and raise awareness of specific types of abuse will be encouraged and promoted.
- One victim or survivor should not be expected to attend a meeting alone and represent the views of others. RCOs will make sure that there is a minimum of three (ideally five) victims and/or survivors in any participatory group or activity with the commitment to listen to more views of survivors.
- Partnerships with victims' and survivors' groups as well as survivor advocates and organisations will be further established to ensure equity and the best possible representation of views.

Ethics

- Ethics is at the heart of every survivor participation practice in the Church of England.
- Church officers should treat everyone with fairness, integrity, and honesty about what can, and cannot, be decided or achieved.
- The best outcomes can be achieved when relationships with victims and survivors are built early in the planning stages of safeguarding developments and improvements.
- Some might see power imbalances in participation. However, there are no power differences when safeguarding is everybody's responsibility, and all have the power to shape developments that aim to keep everyone safe.
- RCOs will give value and attention to human relationships, authenticity, and truth to fulfil this sharing of safeguarding responsibility.

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Using task-focused approaches that deliver outcomes and make an impact on keeping people safe

Reciprocal Learning

- Survivor participation is an opportunity for everyone involved to learn and hear new perspectives whether they are a survivor, church officer or leader, academic researcher or subject expert. Open spaces of dialogue and reciprocal learning will be created and facilitated to enable everyone to come together on equal footing.
- Constructive criticism, feedback, and learning from past experiences, mistakes, case reviews, and public inquiries will all be sought and encouraged.
- Research and evaluation tools will help to create new knowledge and identify good practice.
- The NST is committed to creating tools and resources to enable any Church body and RCOs to reflect and develop professionally.
- Training and learning opportunities will be provided to volunteer survivors to upskill for specific specialist tasks (GDPR for instance)
- The creativity and imagination of victims and survivors and church officers will be trusted and fostered. Arts, poetry, writing, theatre, and other creative means will be used to amplify the voices of victims and survivors and thereby maximise learning for everyone.



Using task-focused approaches that deliver outcomes and make an impact on keeping people safe

Achievements

- Each activity should aim to improve Church safeguarding and keep everyone safe.
- The time and commitment of victims and survivors (including children and young people) to take part in and commit to safeguarding will always be acknowledged at the end of any activity, group or project.
- It is important to appreciate and honour victims and survivors, however they choose to participate.

Resources

- Self-reflection guide for Church Officers (under development)
- Expenses and Honorarium policy
- Suggested feedback form (under development)

Impact and evaluation

- Ways to monitor and evaluate survivors' experiences of participation will be embedded within the internal processes.
- Survivors will have options to share their experiences anonymously, leave comments, or opt out entirely.
- The NST is committed to creating a system for measuring and monitoring the impact of survivor participation at the individual and institutional levels. Victims and survivors want to see the impact they make on the life of the Church.
- The outcomes and the impact of survivor participation will be shared with survivors and publicly in an open and transparent way.

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Committing to appropriately resourced, open, transparent, and ongoing survivor participation in safeguarding

A whole church approach

- Church bodies will make sure that there are resources to maintain survivor participation before they begin. When survivor participation starts, it is vital to be continued and be embedded as practice.
- It is crucial to dedicate adequate time to plan survivor participation.
- Anyone involved in survivor participation activities will be supported to self-reflect and learn in the overall task of keeping all people safe.
- NST's survivor participation team is available for advice and guidance.
- RCOs will know their responsibilities and will be accountable for them.
- Survivors will be heard when safeguarding and matters related to survivor participation are discussed in the governance bodies of the Church (General Synod, Dioceses' Synods, Dioceses' safeguarding panels, etc.).



Committing to appropriately resources, open, transparent and ongoing survivor participation in safeguarding

Openness and transparency

- Survivor participation is an evolving concept for the Church, and all church officers are advised to be flexible as new ideas and methods are introduced.
- Creativity should be encouraged as well as initiatives that create a lasting impact on safeguarding.
- RCOs will be open and honest about what type of participation is offered and how decisions are made.
- The progress, implementation and review of the framework will be shared publicly.
- Opportunities for future participation will be kept open to survivors if they would like to.

Resources

- [CoE's Survivor Participation webpage](#)
- [Checklist: What to consider before starting survivor engagement](#)

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GDPR stands for the General Data Protection Regulation which is a law that regulates how companies and organisations collect and process personal data. The [Data Protection Act 2018](#) is the UK's implementation of GDPR.

The General Synod is the General Assembly of the Church of England. [The General Synod](#) considers and approves legislation affecting the whole of the Church of England, formulates new forms of worship, debates matters of national and international importance, and approves the annual budget for the work of the Church at national level.

Honorarium is a discretionary payment given to survivors for their time and commitment in taking part in safeguarding developments and activities in the Church.

Lived experiences are the experiences that someone had themselves, especially when these give the person a knowledge or understanding that people who have only heard about such experiences do not have.

NST is the National Safeguarding Team of the Church of England which manages complex safeguarding cases (involving several dioceses) and those relating to senior clergy including bishops and deans. The NST is also responsible for leading on House of Bishops policy and practice guidance, and developing safeguarding training.

National Safeguarding Standards are six standards in the Church of England used to understand the quality and, the impact of safeguarding activity in the Church. The **Quality Assurance Framework** is a document that sets out the who, when and how to assess the quality of safeguarding in the Church using the six national safeguarding standards.

Personal participation plan is a confidential document that contains personal information and details of the reasonable adjustments a volunteer might have prior to start to participate in safeguarding.

Plain English is writing that helps the reader to understand the message the first time they read it. It uses short, clear sentences, everyday words and avoids jargon.

Triggers are things that cause someone to feel upset and frightened because they remember bad things that have happened in the past.

Reasonable adjustments mean adjustments that will help someone to access information in a practical and affordable way, which do not cause harm to others.

Trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that an individual experiences as harmful or life-threatening. While unique to the individual, the experience of trauma can cause lasting adverse effects, limiting the ability to function and achieve mental, physical, social, emotional or spiritual well-being.

Being trauma-informed means working in ways that prevent re-traumatisation and creating the conditions that support healing more broadly.



Authoring Information

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