

Safe Spaces Briefing Paper

Background

As you may be aware, Victim Support (VS) has been awarded the contract to manage the new flagship project: Safe Spaces, a joint Anglican and Catholic Church project to provide a vital support service for survivors of church-related abuse.

Although the churches have funded the service, it is run independently by the charity Victim Support, who are one of the leading charities providing specialist support to survivors of abuse in England and Wales. We work towards a world where people affected by crime or traumatic events get the support they need and respect they deserve.

Service

Safe Spaces is a free and independent support service, providing a confidential, personal and safe space for anyone who has been abused through their relationship with either the Church of England or the Catholic Church of England and Wales.

Safe Spaces comprises a team of trained support advocates who have undergone specialist training in supporting survivors of sexual violence and who have received additional specific training in how the churches respond to abuse cases, the way in which faith and church-related settings have been used to carry out abuse, and the particular issues affecting people who have had or still have, a relationship with the church.

The team are based in Wakefield, West Yorkshire, but it is a national service providing remote support through our helpline, live chat service and website. Remote support is provided for as long as the survivor needs. This can be advocating for the survivor, giving them support, providing information (including information on church and police procedures), understanding individual needs and jointly working on individual support plans. If face-to-face support is also required, contact and referrals will be made with appropriate local organisations depending on need.

Eligibility

Safe Spaces is for anyone who feels they have experienced church related abuse of any form in England or Wales.

This may have been in relation to the Church of England, Catholic Church in England and Wales or the Church in Wales.

By 'church related', this may include:

- Abuse by a church officer. A church officer is any person, ordained or lay, paid or voluntary, who holds a role in the church.
- Abuse that is linked to participating in a church-led activity or group.

The service is for people who live in **England and Wales**. If someone lives outside of England and Wales, but suffered abuse by a Church Officer from the Church of England, Catholic Church in England and Wales or the Church in Wales, we will endeavour to provide support but this may be limited due to the support available outside of England and Wales.

It is for people **aged 18 or over, but the abuse can have happened at any time in the past**. If support is required for someone younger, we will endeavour to find appropriate local support.

Survivors **do not have to have reported the incident** to the Church authorities or the Police in order to access support.

You do not need to be a **current active member** of the church in order to access support.

It is for people who've experienced **any kind of abuse** – this includes (but is not limited to) sexual violence, inappropriate sexual behaviour, physical abuse, financial abuse or exploitation, psychological abuse (including spiritual abuse), domestic abuse, coercive and controlling behaviour.

Service Start Date

The Safe Spaces service will be available from Tuesday 29th September 2020.

Opening Hours

Our dedicated Safe Spaces team are available through our helpline and live chat service between Monday–Saturday 10am-6pm, apart from Thursdays when the service is open 12-8pm.

Making a Referral

If you would like to make a referral, please contact us on the number below. Alternatively, you can complete the attached referral form and send to us using the email address below.

Our team will make contact within 48 hours of receiving a referral (72 hours at weekends),

Contact Details

You can contact the Safe Spaces team from 29th September by:-

Tel:- 0300 303 1056 (answerphone available outside of opening times)

Email:- safespaces@victimsupport.org.uk

LiveChat:- www.SafeSpacesEnglandandWales.org.uk

Website:- www.SafeSpacesEnglandandWales.org.uk

