

Sheffield Diocese – Survivor Strategy

Introduction:

The Diocese of Sheffield as part of the Church of England recognises that the Church has sometimes failed to keep people safe in the way that everyone deserves and the Gospel requires. In our Diocese we are passionate about learning from past failures to make the necessary changes, so that we do everything we possibly can to keep people safe and respond well when things go wrong.

The Church of England as a whole is committed to ensuring safe worship¹ and that there is a proactive approach to safeguarding at all levels for children, young people and adults with vulnerabilities. We recognise that we do not always get it right and are committed to the care and support of those who have experienced harm.

Bishop Pete and Bishop Sophie together with all members of the Bishop's Senior Staff Team and the Diocesan safeguarding team are responding to concerns regarding poor responses in the past by creating a network of different individuals who have experiences to contribute. We want to make sure that we are doing all that we can to offer those impacted by church abuse of any kind the support that they need.

As a response to the past cases review and IICSA recommendations, the National Safeguarding Team for the Church of England has now developed practice guidance² to underpin survivor support. We refer in this document to victims as survivors, but recognise that it is the individual's decision how they wish to be identified.

Position Statement:

The Bishop of Sheffield, the Chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Management Group and the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor, have agreed this strategy and are fully committed to ensuring that we proactively and appropriately support survivors. The Diocesan Safeguarding Management Group will be responsible for the monitoring of the Strategy and will oversee the development of a Strategy Action Plan on an annual basis to measure its impact and ensure that it continually meets the agreed criteria.

This strategy sets out how we will

1. Ensure that the welfare of children, young people and adults with vulnerabilities is of paramount importance.
2. Act with the needs of the vulnerable at the centre of our decision-making.
3. Ensure a survivor-centric approach that is respectful, trauma informed and independent of the Diocese whenever a survivor requires this.

Equalities Statement:

We have considered our equality obligations in accordance with s149 Equality Act 2010³. We believe that the commitments in this strategy are not directly discriminatory, as they

¹ Promoting a Safer Church – Safeguarding policy statement for children, young people and adults - [safer \(churchofengland.org\)](https://www.churchofengland.org/safer)

² [Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse | The Church of England](https://www.churchofengland.org/responding-well-to-victims-and-survivors-of-abuse)

³ Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (EA) places a duty on Ministers and government Departments, when exercising their

would not result in a survivor being treated less favourably because of their protected characteristic. We believe our approach will be positive for survivors generally, including those with protected characteristics.

Our Approach:

We recognise that every survivor's journey is different and so we will respond to their particular needs, regardless of whether they reported a crime or not. Our approach is informed by our awareness of key legislation that is already in place to support survivors on this journey:

- The Victims' Code⁴ is one of the most important documents for survivors of crime, as it sets out in law the services and information they are entitled to receive as they interact with the criminal justice system.
- The Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme⁵ (CICS) is a statutory scheme that provides government funded compensation to survivors of violent crime.
- The Victims' Commissioner⁶ is a statutory office holder whose role is to promote the interests of survivors and witnesses; encourage good practice in the treatment of survivors and witnesses; and keep under review the operation of the Victims' Code

We are committed to continually learn from the experiences of survivors and make changes based on that learning to ensure better support.

Based on learning from reviews it is clear that disclosing abuse can be a difficult decision that is brave and requires courage, and the processes that follow can in themselves be as traumatising as the abuse itself.

The Diocese of Sheffield aims to provide individual support in some or all of the following ways. The support each survivor needs is different and therefore we will discuss and agree with each individual how best to support them.

- Providing timely and accurate information
- Liaising with statutory partners to provide a multi-agency coordinated response that keeps the survivor central
- Fair, respectful treatment and communication that is unbiased and non-discriminatory
- Planned pastoral care available within a church context for those that want this or access to trauma informed support that is independent of the Diocese⁷
- Assessment of any risk that the survivor and others might be facing, and then help to develop safety and support plans that are individual to the needs of the survivor
- Provision of an outline of options for support to empower survivors to make informed decisions

functions, to have 'due regard' to the need to: Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other prohibited conduct under the Equality Act 2010; Advance equality of opportunity between different groups (those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not); and Foster good relations between different groups (those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it).

⁴ <https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/help-and-support/your-rights/victims-code>

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/claim-compensation-criminal-injury>

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/victims-strategy>

⁷ https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/forgivenessandreconciliation_0.pdf

- Supporting the survivor to report an assault to the police, access civil redress or make a formal internal complaint if they choose to do so
- Attendance with the survivor at any police interviews or court proceedings or complaints meetings as appropriate
- Help with accessing other services such as health screening and counselling and the provision of funding for these services where appropriate
- Helping the survivor to understand better the criminal justice and court process appropriately as the process evolves
- Helping the survivor to better understand, and navigate, the church-based complaints route
- Regular and ongoing telephone contact and/or face-to-face meetings
- Helping the survivor to share their experience, should they wish, to better inform church practice and/or ensure better support of others
- Paramount to all the support offered is the anonymity and confidentiality of the survivor

The Diocesan Safeguarding Team is a central point of contact for safeguarding issues across the Diocese, contact details are available on the Diocesan website. We will adhere to the national guidance regarding direct engagement with survivors. It is the role of the Diocesan Safeguarding Team to ensure

- There is a broad spectrum of support options available to meet the needs of those who may be seeking support
- That support persons offered by the Diocese will be properly recruited and trained for the role
- Provision of support is always discussed with the statutory agencies where there is police or local authority involvement
- The survivor is offered confidential and impartial advice
- No information provided is shared without survivor consent unless the information suggests that there may be a continuing risk of harm to the survivor or that others may currently be at risk of harm
- If there is a Police investigation, in line with legal obligations, appropriate information is shared