

## Responding Well to Survivors of Abuse

### **1. Introduction**

The Church in Wales is committed to responding well to survivors. The Church in Wales recognise that achieving the right response to survivors requires this guidance to be put into action by providing a compassionate and empathic response, listening and responding appropriately, and building trusting relationships. Survivors may have a clear picture of what a 'good response' looks like and this will be sought and followed, with any limitations and boundaries set out clearly from the start. This document sets out a framework for a best practice response by the Church in Wales, but it must not constrain the Church in Wales from responding differently if that is in the best interest of the survivor. The Church will have contact with survivors who have experienced abuse both within the Church in Wales and outside of it in their families, communities and other churches, denominations and faiths. There is however a particular focus within this guidance on those that have a lived experience of abuse from within the Church in Wales.

#### Terminology

The terms 'victim', 'survivor' and 'those with lived experience of abuse' are different terms used for describing people that have experienced abuse. Individuals will have personal preferences as to the terminology used, and this should be respected, and agreed terminology used in communications with or about that individual. Throughout this guidance the term survivor will be predominantly used to provide consistency but does not represent any chosen term being seen as more significant than another.

#### General Principles

The Church in Wales will adopt the following principles during its engagement with survivors:

- Foster a culture of listening, transparency and respect that makes it safe to disclose. Survivors will know that they are heard, understood, taken seriously and supported.
- Survivors and Church workers will know what process to follow if someone reports abuse.
- The response to disclosures will be survivor-centred and will not cause further trauma to the person disclosing. Concerns will be acted upon appropriately, and in a timely fashion.
- Responders will understand the impact of trauma and the best way to respond to it.
- Survivors will be helped to receive the support they need, both from the Church and other people and organisations.

(NB these have been developed from a survivor voices project commissioned by C of E in 2020)

### **2. Foundations to Good Practice**

The Church in Wales have a number of building blocks in place to support the provision of a good response to survivors. These will be referred to consistently throughout the policy as our building blocks for good practice.

## Governance:

- Governing Body (Provincial Safeguarding Policy)
- Committee
- Panel
- Audit

## Provincial Safeguarding Team:

- Provincial Safeguarding Officers
- Training
- Engagement and Assurance

## Policy Procedure and Guidance

### Governance

The Governing Body of the Church in Wales has approved the Provincial Safeguarding Policy. This guidance of 'Responding well to survivors of abuse' sits below the framework of the Provincial Policy to provide detail of the required response.

The Standing Committee of the Governing Body receive reports from the Safeguarding Committee to ensure that senior leadership have influence over safeguarding, including the response to survivors. The Safeguarding Committee provide oversight of safeguarding within all areas of the Church in Wales and have authority for approval of all safeguarding guidance, including this document.

The Committee has scrutiny over various safeguarding workstreams. It includes scrutiny of the work of the Safeguarding Panel who quality assure the casework actioned by the Provincial Safeguarding Team, including its response to survivors. The Committee scrutiny and Panel quality assurance include both internal and external audit processes of the Church in Wales's Safeguarding standards. Responding well to survivors is a thread through many of these safeguarding standards. The audits lead to lessons learned and best practice recommendations that further improve the required response to survivors.

### Provincial Safeguarding Team:

Provincial Safeguarding Officers – The Provincial Safeguarding Officer's (PSO's) are likely to be the single point of contact for survivors in most cases (alternatives will be offered where it is requested by the survivor). The PSO's are recruited from a range of safeguarding backgrounds and provide professional, independent knowledge and advice to the Church in Wales. Their knowledge and skills are central to the Church responding well to Survivors.

Training - There is a broad spectrum of training modules being delivered in the Church In Wales, each contributing to equipping the Church In Wales to respond well to survivors.

Engagement and Assurance - The engagement and assurance roles provide support for local safeguarding leads within diocese, ministry / mission areas and churches in order to implement this guidance.

### Policy, Procedure and Guidance

The Church in Wales safeguarding policy, procedures and guidance documents are routinely reviewed. The reviews take note of lessons learned and ensure compliance with best practice provided by statutory and voluntary organisations in responding to survivors of abuse.

### **3. Disclosure**

The Church recognises the difficulty for someone to share their experience of abuse. It often leads to a return to traumatic events that cause significant distress. Survivors can experience a poor and inadequate response to a disclosure, such as blame, disbelief, or being shut down. This can add to the difficulty in someone choosing to make further disclosures.

The Truth Project, within the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, gave more than 6,000 victims and survivors of child sexual abuse an opportunity to share their experiences. The Truth Project found that:

*'The majority of victims and survivors did not disclose child sexual abuse at the time that it was happening. Just 33 percent of Truth Project participants who discussed disclosure said that they disclosed that they were being sexually abused at the time. Most disclosed to a parent, the police or someone within the institution in which they were abused. Amongst those who did disclose child sexual abuse at the time, the majority said that they did not receive the help and protection that they needed. Victims and survivors often said that the person to whom they disclosed responded inadequately. Many victims and survivors were accused of lying, were blamed or were silenced. These experiences were common, whether victims and survivors disclosed as children in the 1950s or 2010s. Victims and survivors commonly said that negative responses to disclosures meant they never wanted to talk about their experiences of child sexual abuse again.'*

This testimony from survivors serves as a reminder of the importance of ensuring the right response to a disclosure. A survivor may disclose to anyone in a church context. It may not necessarily be the cleric or the safeguarding officer. We will therefore strive to ensure a church culture where it is safe to disclose and people respond well to survivors.

The Church in Wales will create and promote a healthy Church Culture which facilitates disclosures.

It must know and communicate to all associated within it:

- how victims and survivors can report abuse within the Church.
- the support available to disclosers immediately after their disclosure and how they will be assisted during and after the investigation.
- the processes that will be followed when abuse (or risk of abuse) is disclosed and what will happen to the personal information of people about whom abuse is disclosed.
- how allegations of abuse are reported to statutory services.
- how victims and survivors can contact statutory services if they believe that they have been abused or are at risk of being abused.
- contact details for services for victims and survivors.
- All disclosures of abuse must be referred to the Provincial Safeguarding Team

Information on safeguarding must be translated into both Welsh and English

#### How this will be achieved

##### Policy, Procedure and Guidance

Each Ministry / Mission Area Council must adopt the Church in Wales Safeguarding policy. The Safeguarding Policy is adopted annually, by Churches, Cathedrals, Mission/Ministry Areas, and Diocese, thereby raising awareness of Safeguarding, reporting processes, and emphasising that safeguarding is 'everyone's responsibility'. The Policy statement poster is displayed in a public place in each Church providing details of local safeguarding leads. The Church in Wales guidance includes information on responding to concerns to explain the process to be followed when abuse is disclosed.

##### Raising Awareness and knowledge

The Church in Wales is committed to celebrating 'Safeguarding Sunday', which contributes to raising the profile of safeguarding. The PST engagement and assurance activity provides an opportunity to support local understanding of provincial safeguarding procedures and guidance. This links to the local delivery of safeguarding training that raises awareness and understanding of the required response and good practice. A broad range of training modules are delivered for people that work at different levels within the Church. As examples, the senior leadership safeguarding training focusses on how culture and leadership has a positive impact on safeguarding, while the safeguarding awareness module equips congregation members with the knowledge and skills to respond well to disclosure.

A specific training module will also be delivered to further enhance the knowledge and skills of clergy and church officers in responding well to survivors. This will address:

- Understanding what a survivor centred, trauma informed response looks like
- Informing the survivor as early as possible what information will need to be disclosed and to whom.
- Receiving a disclosure at a survivor's pace and understanding this may not be chronological or coherent.
- Recording of disclosures (a written record made as soon as possible and verified with the survivor). These records may be used in criminal proceedings.
- Active listening skills
- Immediate care of a survivor following disclosure (signposting to available support inside and outside the church)..
- Responding well both face to face and via other means, e.g. online.

Here is some best practice guidance for receiving a disclosure:

- Time and Place- It is always best to let a victim or survivor speak when and where they are ready, but it might be possible to consider issues of safety, privacy, and confidentiality. Be mindful of the possible need for the victim or survivor to meet away from church-related surroundings and the consider the choice of where to talk carefully.
- Confidentiality- Confidentiality is important in gaining trust, but it is essential that the victim or survivor is made clear about the limits and boundaries on confidentiality and the possible need to report any ongoing risk of harm or abuse of a child or adult at risk.
- Privacy- It should be explored with the victim or survivor whether it is appropriate to meet alone or whether another person should be present.
- Expectations- It is important to ascertain what the victim or survivor is expecting and to explore how that might be achieved.
- Hearing the disclosure
  - o try to stay calm and to avoid showing shock or upset
  - o accept what the victim or survivor is saying and show that you take them seriously
  - o listen without judgement and allow the person to tell their story
  - o try not to interrupt or prompt the victim or survivor to say more
  - o seek clarification of facts but do not ask leading questions
  - o reassure the victim or survivor that it was right to disclose
  - o agree what you will do next
- Next steps- It is important to agree what will happen next, which might include taking immediate action to prevent further harm, seeking advice and support from the Provincial

Safeguarding Team and/or signposting the victim or survivor to appropriate sources of specialist care. Ensure that the victim or survivor has a consistent point of contact. Under no circumstances make any attempt to contact an alleged abuser. If the disclosure is made by a child, efforts must be made to contact a Provincial Safeguarding Officer, before the child leaves in case immediate action is required.

- **Consent-** If the victim or survivor is an adult disclosing abuse that occurred when they were an adult, the action you take will, in most cases, require the consent of the individual. Adult victims and survivors should be encouraged to report their abuse, with support from the church if necessary, but should not be disempowered by taking away their control of the situation. However, if an adult victim or survivor discloses abuse that they experienced while still a child, it might be necessary to report the abuse to the police even without the consent or participation of the victim or survivor and advice must be taken from a Provincial Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible. Similarly, advice should be taken if the adult disclosing abuse appears to have impaired capacity to make informed decisions in relation to the abuse. A child disclosing their own abuse, or the abuse of another child must always be reported to a Provincial Safeguarding Officer and referred to the police and social services. Children disclosing abuse should be told that the information will be shared with trusted adults for their protection.
- **Recording-** It is essential that a detailed and accurate record of a disclosure of abuse is made as soon as possible following the disclosure, using the exact words of the victim or survivor as far as possible. The account must be signed, dated, and retained securely for sharing with the Provincial Safeguarding Team

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**If you have information about a safeguarding situation where a child or adult is in immediate danger or requires urgent medical attention, please call the emergency services now on 999 – DO NOT DELAY.**

**If you think that a child or adult is at risk of harm but is not in immediate danger, please call the local authority social services department.**

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#### **4. Survivor Support**

The support needs of survivors are varied and therefore survivor support services need to respond flexibly. Survivor experiences are bespoke to the individual and so a range of services are required at different times during the recovery journey. This can include immediate emergency support, short and medium term services, all that can be accessed in a timely manner by survivors.

Engagement activity has identified the support services that survivors request:

- Support available at the point of need, for as long as assessed as appropriate, with easy re-access and without pressure;
- Support without agenda – i.e. that does not push them down a criminal justice route (but that would support them to report if they choose to do so);
- A choice of support providers: statutory and voluntary sector specialist sexual violence services;
- A choice of support: therapeutic, emotional support, advocacy, crisis intervention, group work, and helpline as a minimum;
- Flexible access routes – e.g. by text or email as well as in person, or via a third person referral;
- Gender sensitive and specific service delivery, with choice of female or male support workers. For some survivors this meant accessing support via women only or men only referral pathways as this supported them to feel safe and removed barriers to accessing support
- Accessible services: varied appointment times, clear and known referral pathways, multiple pathways to specialist support, a quick response and services close to home.
- The need for varied services is supported by research which finds that interventions need to be tailored depending on the point of recovery.

*(NB above taken from **Survivors' Journeys – Survivors' Voices: Including the voice of survivors in commissioning support services**)*

The Church in Wales will adopt the following principles. Survivors will:

- be provided with a single point of contact in the Church In Wales.
- have a choice of the contact person in terms of gender, language and whether they are from outside the Church in Wales.
- have the opportunity to explore and articulate their support needs. The support needs will be regularly reviewed.
- receive support to access the services that meet their needs in a timely manner, including support that takes account of the specific nature of Church based abuse.
- be considered for funding provision within the Church in Wales in a simple, timely manner, where support incurs a cost.
- be able to access pastoral support when requested.

#### How this will be achieved

All cases of Church based abuse will be referred to the Provincial Safeguarding Team. The PST will be responsible for establishing the single point of contact for a survivor, that will often be a PST Safeguarding Officer. If a survivor prefers that the single point of contact is fully independent of the Church in Wales, this will be explored via a referral to Safe Spaces. Referrals to other specialist services can be considered with the agreement of the survivor, e.g. an Independent Sexual Violence Adviser (ISVA) at a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) such as New Pathways.

The PST will lead in identifying local support services to meet the needs of survivors. PST members are based in the diocese in which they serve which enables them to develop local knowledge of available support and build professional networks. If appropriate support requires funding then an

application will be made to the Survivor Support Scheme. The scheme will assess and decide upon required funding. (see Survivor Support Scheme Guidance).

Survivors of abuse within the Church in Wales are able to obtain specialist support from Safe Spaces. This is a free and independent support service, providing a confidential, personal and safe space for anyone who has been abused by someone in the Church or as a result of their relationship with the Church in Wales. The PST will ensure all survivors are given the details of Safe Spaces at the earliest opportunity and can assist in completing the required referral.

The PST will ensure that their continuous professional development remains up to date in relation to supporting survivors. This will include the provision of specific training in relation to Church based abuse for PST staff and members of Safeguarding Committee and Safeguarding Panel.

Each Diocese will be invited to identify church officers (lay or ordained) to provide appropriate pastoral support to survivors of abuse ( with a choice of gender and language being available). The PST will refer to the diocese when pastoral support is requested by a survivor. Specific training will be developed for those offering pastoral support to survivors of church based abuse. The training will include the following: Understanding the role and boundaries of the pastoral support to survivors; Understanding the impacts of church based abuse, specifically on spirituality; Understanding forgiveness in the context of church based abuse.

Where victims and survivors are asked to engage in internal processes such as giving evidence at tribunals, it is important that they are offered support at every level. Should they be requested to attend a tribunal they should be given the opportunity to take a supporter with them and to have their needs met. They should be protected from direct contact with their abuser or alleged abuser at any such meetings, unless they specifically request otherwise, in which case the situation must be managed safely and sensitively. The welfare needs of victims and survivors throughout these processes should be paramount and their needs discussed at the outset

The Safeguarding Panel, during their quality assurance of casework, will consider if support has been appropriately addressed with the survivor. If themes arise regarding the required response, the information will be shared with Safeguarding Committee to address any required improvements.

### **Links to Support for Victims and Survivors outside of the Church In Wales**

#### Safe Spaces

<https://www.safespacesenglandandwales.org.uk> 0300 303 1056

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

#### New Pathways

<http://www.newpathways.org.uk> 01685 379 310

New Pathways is a registered charitable company that provides a range of specialist

counselling and advocacy services for women, men, children, and young people who have been affected by rape or sexual abuse.

#### The Survivors Trust

0808 801 0818

[www.thesurvivorstrust.org](http://www.thesurvivorstrust.org)

The Survivors Trust is an umbrella agency for specialist rape and sexual abuse services in the UK and provides information, advice, support and therapy to survivors.

#### MACSAS

0808 801 0340

(Ministry and Clergy Sexual Abuse Survivors)

[www.macsas.org.uk](http://www.macsas.org.uk)

MACSAS supports women and men who have been sexually abused, as children or adults, by ministers, clergy, or others under the guise of the Church. MACSAS supports both Survivors who have remained within their Christian communities and those who have left.

#### NAPAC

0808 801 0331

(National Association for People Abused in Childhood)

<https://www.napac.org.uk>

NAPAC offers support to adult survivors of all types of childhood abuse, including physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect.

#### Broken Rites

<https://www.brokenrites.org>

Broken Rites is an international group offering mutual support and information to separated and divorced spouses and partners of clergy, ministers, and Church Army Officers

### **5. Apologising**

An apology can be extremely helpful to survivors of abuse. If carried out sincerely and sensitively, it can be therapeutic and contribute to the healing process. It is well established within Church teachings that we should acknowledge our sins and seek God's forgiveness with a true demonstration of repentance. It is appropriate that the Church apply this in the response to survivors of Church based abuse, and consider how it can repair and redress the harm caused. The decision around whether to issue an apology should be based upon whether an apology is appropriate based on available information, and the wishes of the survivor. An apology does not

equate to accepting liability. The Compensation Act 2006 states that “offering an apology, an offer of treatment and other redress shall not in itself amount to an admission of negligence or a breach of statutory duty.”

The Church in Wales will apologise when:

There is a conviction for Church related abuse OR when civil proceedings, an internal investigation or disciplinary proceedings find that Church related abuse has occurred OR when an independent review finds that the Church in Wales has failed in its response to a survivor.

When the above criteria is not met the Church will still *consider* whether to make an apology.

An apology will not depend on whether the perpetrator is alive or deceased. Legal advice will be sought prior to releasing an apology [particularly around whether the apology should be made with or without acceptance of liability).

The Bishops office where the abuse occurred is responsible for issuing the apology. The Archbishop will issue an apology if more than one diocese is implicated in the abuse or if the perpetrator is a Bishop.

Any expectation from the survivor regarding the apology will be sought and incorporated, wherever possible.

Where an in person apology is requested and appropriate, a member of the PST should be present. The survivor should also be supported at the meeting by a person of their choice.

#### How this will be achieved

The Provincial Safeguarding Officer (PSO) dealing with the case will consider when an apology is required or should be considered. The PSO will gain the view of the survivor. The case will then be discussed at Triage, where consultation can occur with the Legal and HR departments. The PSO will inform the Bishop or Archbishop when an apology has been recommended by the Triage group. Support will be provided by the PST and legal department to draft the content of an apology, and to support the Bishop in any in-person apology meetings. Bishops and PSO's will be provided with training on best practice in relation to issuing an apology to a survivor.

The content of an apology should address the following factors:

- Acknowledge the harm caused - explain that the emotional or physical harm that the survivor has experienced is understood.
- Renounce the act – state that what the survivor has experienced was wrong and should not have happened. If there has been a formal investigation, the apology can restate the facts of the outcome and Church's renunciation of the acts of the Church Officer(s).
- Explore atonement – invite the survivor to discuss how the Church can atone for the harm caused.
- Reassure the victim – explain the measures taken to prevent recurrence of the harm caused.
- Show appropriate values – demonstrate sorrow and repentance for its actions or the sinful activities of the Church Officer(s).

(Adapted from DeYoung, K. (2018)). [Toward a theology of apology](#))

Best practice points in relation to face to face meetings include the following:

- The survivor is enabled to have a support person or two of their choice in the meeting and choose who they receive the apology from;
- The Bishop/Archbishop should start the meeting by expressing their regret and sorrow about the abuse and harm caused;
- If the survivor wishes, they should be invited to share any their abuse experience and the impact it has had upon them;
- The Bishop and Church officers should show active listening and empathy towards the survivor and acknowledge the harm caused;
- Any changes and improvements that have been made since the abuse occurred or as a direct result of this investigation should be shared with the survivor but done in a way to reassure and not minimise the abuse that occurred.

### **A Note on Forgiveness**

Forgiveness is a gift from God (Col. 1:14) and brings us to a deeper experience of God's love. It is also a complex issue especially for those who have been abused. Survivors or victims of abuse ought not to be urged to forgive unconditionally when they are not able to make this decision. The dynamics of power in pastoral encounters must be acknowledged so that survivors or victims do not feel disempowered and unable therefore to reflect on their experiences. It is therefore inappropriate to suggest to a victim or survivor of abuse that they have failed if they do not forgive their abuser or that their progress will be impaired or imperilled. Forgiveness is a deeply personal matter. For some, it will be an important aspect of their healing and will bring peace and closure. For others, it might be judged either unnecessary or even inappropriate because the abuser has not shown remorse. Everyone will need to journey at their own pace and in a way which is manageable. The question of forgiveness is one which a victim or survivor may wish to explore in conversation with a Christian skilled in listening and pastoral care. The Church in Wales is able to provide such support, but no victim or survivor should be made to feel that this is necessary. Care must be taken to ensure that the victim or survivor feels welcome and supported in their church, particularly when the harm or abuse they experienced is known within the congregation, perhaps following the arrest of an abuser. It is essential that the church community does not speculate on the abuse or in any way blame the victim or survivor for speaking out about their experience. The church is called to provide a safe space in which people can discover peace, acceptance and a loving welcome