



Victim And Survivor Care Charter



The Catholic Diocese of
Nottingham

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1. Introduction

The Diocese of Nottingham is committed to promoting a healthy, compassionate, and safe culture in order to encourage disclosures and support victims and survivors of abuse. Getting safeguarding right is about more than following procedures, it is also about how they are implemented and how people are treated and related to. We seek to provide a compassionate, caring, and respectful response to all individuals who have been affected by allegations of abuse within a church setting, and who seek its help and healing. All reasonable efforts will be made to ensure that support is offered to those who seek it, confidentially, quickly, and effectively. Support will be focussed on the best interests and welfare of children and adults and where support is provided, it will be done in a manner which respects the individual's dignity, privacy, and safety, and which ensures so far as possible that particular needs relating to race, culture, age, language, religious beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, or disability are addressed.

The Bishop, Trustees and all members who serve the Diocese has the mission to provide safe church communities and prevent abuse by creating and maintaining healthy cultures. These environments will also help to ensure that abuse is responded to well, including good care and support for victims and survivors. Disclosing current or non-recent abuse is extremely difficult for a range of reasons and we should be adequately trained in the knowledge of how to respond to a victim's disclosure and ability to empathise with their needs.

2. Communication and Transparency

We will provide clear and accessible information about:

- How victims and survivors can report abuse within the Church.
- Support that is available for victim and survivors following a disclosure.
- 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.
- The process and how statutory services are involved.
- 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 national services for victims and survivors made available.
- Safe spaces service, specifically for victim and survivors of abuse in church.

Information will be made available by a variety of methods throughout the Diocese targeting parishes and the wider community. Information on safeguarding must be understandable to the church community and provide clear messages of support to

victims and survivors of abuse. Victims and survivors should be able to obtain safeguarding information without needing to identify themselves as such. The Diocese can promote this by:

- Displaying leaflets, posters and literature about safeguarding on noticeboards or entrances to the church. They can also regularly include safeguarding information during church services, on notice sheets and newsletters.
- Ensuring that safeguarding information is inclusive. Ensure that safeguarding information is translated for worshippers who do not use English as a first language in those parishes where other religious groups share the church or parish halls. It is also advisable for this information to be in accessible language so that people with learning disabilities, who face more risks relative to others, can also understand it. (Parishes can access resources for creating accessible information on the website [CHANGE](#))
- Having a dedicated safeguarding section on the Diocesan and Parish websites.
- Including the need for responsive listening to safeguarding disclosures in sermons and other messages from the pulpit. A parish community could ask itself: “When was the last time the needs of victims and survivors were addressed in a sermon?”
- Once a year having a “Safeguarding Sunday” to focus on safeguarding issues.
- Consulting victims and survivors to get their advice on what information is needed in their setting and the most effective method of communicating this for the desired impact.

3. Support Person

Following a disclosure, the Diocese will offer a victim/survivor of abuse a support person:

The Support Person can assist victims’ and survivors’ recovery by listening, empathising, showing compassion and maintaining their connections with the Church.

It will be considered on a case-by-case basis what a Support Person might do. It may include some of the following elements:

- Support within the community and the Church.
- Listening, being alongside the victim or survivor in their distress.
- Some might be able to provide pastoral and spiritual support (and some victims and survivors might prefer this from a lay person).
- Being easily contactable and readily available to liaise between the victim or survivor and the Diocese or Director of Safeguarding about the management of their safeguarding disclosure.

- Explaining support being offered and assisting victims and survivors to choose and engage with the support options that meet their needs.
- Supporting victims and survivors during meetings with statutory services and other professionals, where appropriate. This should not extend to meetings about the Diocese investigations about their disclosure as this will be a conflict of interest.
- Assisting the victim or survivor with exploring how their longer-term spiritual and welfare needs can be managed.
- Signposting victims and survivors to Safe Spaces and work with any appointed advocate for the survivor.
- Being a befriender to assist the victim or survivors to build their confidence and networks.

4. What the Support Person Role is Not

The Support Person is not the confidant of the victim or survivor. They must be bound by a responsibility to disclose to the appropriate authorities (e.g., the police, Director of Safeguarding) where:

- others are at risk of harm.
- the victim or survivor makes disclosures of intentions to hurt themselves.
- safeguarding information needs to be shared with statutory social care services and criminal justice professionals to assist in the prevention, detection, or prosecution of a crime.

5. Safe Spaces Referral and Support

The Diocese works with Safe Spaces – a free and independent support service for victims and survivors over 18 years old, providing a confidential, personal and safe space for anyone who has been abused through their relationship with the Catholic Church. First Light are a commissioned charity that provide this national service, providing remote support through a 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 on Church and police procedures), understanding individual needs and jointly working on individual support plans. If face-to-face support is required, contact and referrals will be made with appropriate local organisations depending on need.

6. Spiritual and Pastoral Support

Spiritual and pastoral support can be important components of recovery for victims and survivors and can lead to their reconciliation with their local church, if this is what they want.

Type of Support	Responsibility	Eligibility
Therapeutic support to meet emotional and psychological needs in the immediate and medium-term period following a disclosure.	The Director of safeguarding is responsible for coordinating the provision of support, working with the Diocese or other church body	All people who disclose Church-based abuse.
Support Person	The Director of Safeguarding is responsible for facilitating the introduction of the victim or survivor to a Support Person. The Director of Safeguarding is responsible for establishing and supporting the Support person within the diocese.	All people who disclose Church-based abuse.
Spiritual and pastoral support	The Director of Safeguarding is responsible for organising spiritual and pastoral support for victims and survivors.	All people who disclose Church-based abuse.
Apology	The Bishop is responsible for overseeing this work.	
Safe Spaces	This is provided by First Light through Church funding, either the Director of safeguarding can make a referral with consent or will pass the details to the victim/survivor for self-help when needed.	All people who disclose Church-based abuse.

7. Disclosures

We will listen to disclosures where confidentiality and privacy can be guaranteed, and interruptions avoided. Some victims and survivors may want a quiet place while

others may need suitably public places which are visible to others because this makes them feel safe. If the conversation is planned, then it may be preferable to allow victims and survivors to choose the location and time.

When a disclosure is made an accurate record of what the victim or survivor discloses because this will facilitate appropriate responses and it may also be used in future legal proceedings. After a record of the disclosure, we will explain the next steps.

Following a disclosure, the diocese where the abuse took place or is alleged to have taken place must take such reasonable steps to provide the support for the victim or survivor. This applies even if the victim or survivor lives in a different area or is no longer connected with the Diocese.

The Director of Safeguarding will work with and alongside the victim or survivor and any other religious group or order to identify the support that is needed where the allegation involves a religious order or group that operate/had operated in the Diocese at the time of the alleged abuse, how this will be arranged and by whom, and when the provision will start. This should be in addition to any necessary safeguarding actions undertaken. Where the religious order or group has chosen, this requirement must be undertaken by their safeguarding lead and the Religious Life Safeguarding Service.

Where the abuse is alleged to have taken place in more than one Diocese or Religious Order or group, the relevant church body for the purposes of coordinating the provision of support is the church body to which the disclosure was made. However, the other Church Bodies in which it is alleged abuse has also taken place must work with the Relevant Church Body in relation to the provision of support.

The Diocese must take prompt steps to determine if they have a policy of insurance in place which may cover financial support for any therapeutic support needs of the victim/survivor. While they take those steps, the Diocese need to consider what alternative support may be available to fund any identified and agreed therapeutic support for the victim or survivor.

The steps outlined above must be undertaken in a timely manner following disclosure to avoid unnecessary delay to the provision of therapeutic support.

The Diocese must obtain the written consent of victims or survivors before arranging any support or sharing information about them with any providers. The Director of Safeguarding must allow for the victim or survivor to withdraw their consent at any time.

The Diocese will give victims or survivors the time they need to decide whether they want any support services and/or how they want them to be delivered. Relevant Church Bodies must pay attention to whether the victim or survivor is a child or adult, any additional needs they have, their mental capacity to make their own decisions, and existing support within their professional and personal networks they wish to draw upon.

The Director of Safeguarding will provide information of the Safe Spaces service and refer on the request of the victim/survivor.

If a victim or survivor declines the offer of support, the Director of Safeguarding will revisit this periodically to see if they have changed their mind, unless the victim or survivor has made it clear that they do not wish to be contacted. Director of Safeguarding will keep a record of these conversations.

To deliver the above effectively, the Director of Safeguarding must keep themselves informed about the availability of local and national support services for victims and survivors and establish effective relationships with key organisations as and when required.

All actions in response to a disclosure of abuse will be a survivor-centred approach to support.

8. Managing Online Disclosures

Occasionally, victims and survivors may make a disclosure on social media or through email, or by using other electronic platforms. The person should be contacted to continue the discussion. It is up to the victim or survivor to decide how they wish to communicate online or in-person. The responsibility of the person receiving the disclosure is to keep that information safe, but they can of course make the person aware of the need to communicate safely.

9. Responding to Concerns or Allegations Involving Children or Young People

The Diocese of Nottingham seeks to create and maintain a safe environment for all. This includes being open and responding appropriately to concerns and allegations raised by children and young people. If a child or young person directly discloses about abuse happening to them, the following general guidelines will be followed:

- Listen to the child or young person carefully and in a manner that conveys they are being heard and taken seriously.
- Give the child or young person the opportunity to tell their story in their own time.
- Ask questions only for clarification.
- Reassure the child or young person they have done the right thing by disclosing and that the Church will work with statutory services to safeguard them.
- Will not make promises that cannot be kept – for example, that the disclosure will be kept secret.

- Explain to the child or young person what will happen next – that is, the Church Officer will inform the Director of Safeguarding who will progress the disclosure.

The support for children and young people will usually need to involve statutory services and their parents (unless they are implicated as the abuser(s)). The Director of Safeguarding should include the child or young person to arrange the support they need. In most cases young people aged 16 and 17 are able to give consent to support in their own right, but issues of age and consent should always be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Where there is a conflict between the child or young person's wishes and their parents', the Director of Safeguarding will seek advice from their local authority children's services.

10. Mental Capacity

If it is suspected that some victims and survivors do not have the mental capacity to consent to the provision of support or sharing of information, the Director of Safeguarding or person co-ordinating the support should get advice from their local authority safeguarding adults team. Judging mental capacity requires training and it is important that this judgement is not reached arbitrarily. The starting assumption must always be that a person has the mental capacity to make a decision unless it can be established that they lack mental capacity.

This means that we should also make every effort to encourage and support the person to access information and make the decision themselves.

11. Aligning with Criminal Justice Processes

We will ensure that the support provided aligns with ongoing legal and criminal processes. For instance, if the police are involved, then any therapeutic support must follow pre-trial guidelines. However, as outlined in this Crown Prosecution Service's pre-trial guidance "therapy should not be delayed for any reason connected with a criminal investigation or prosecution." This means that therapeutic support for victims and survivors can be prioritised even during police investigations.

12. Building Relationships with Other Services

We provide information about support and advocacy services in their area that victims and survivors can access. This can involve building relationships with relevant statutory services and independent sector providers, including agreements around data sharing. Some examples of relevant services are: Independent Sexual Violence

Adviser (ISVA), Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA), sexual assault referral centres and Victim Support.

There are also in-person and online support groups for victims and survivors. Some victims and survivors might also want to establish their own peer-to-peer support systems. Examples of these include group prayers, safe worship, and engagement with people with first-hand understanding of their situation. Victims and survivors will be encouraged to seek specialist advice if they decide to develop their own mutual support arrangements, for example, from existing victim and survivor groups.

13. Feeding Back on How We Do Things

We know that unfortunately we will not get our care and communication right all the time, for every survivor. The best way for us to continuously improve on how we are doing things, is by receiving honest and constructive feedback on what we are doing well and what we are not doing so well. This is why we welcome spontaneous feedback and will also invite Survivors to comment on how we do things, hopefully at appropriate times in their journey. Feedback can be given to any member of the Safeguarding Team in person, via email, via letter and over the phone by ringing the Diocese on 0115 9539849 and asking to speak to a member of the Safeguarding Team.

At the end of any investigation into an allegation against a member of clergy or significant lay role, a learning lessons review will take place and the survivor/victim will be asked if they wish to contribute. This review will be conducted in accordance with the national guidance. Every six months, we will review the feedback received, formulate improvements to be made and make them. If the survivor does not feel comfortable feeding back to the Safeguarding Team directly or wishes to complain about the service received, they should address their concerns to the Chief Operations Officer. If an investigation by the Chief Operations Officer is required, confidentiality will be maintained to the extent that this is appropriate and practical in the circumstances. The person raising complaints or concerns will be informed of the outcome, subject to the normal rules on confidentiality of personal information.

14. Apology

The Diocese of Nottingham is deeply sorry for anyone who reports they have suffered any kind of abuse through the church and apologises to anyone who has suffered abuse by a member of clergy or employee of the Diocese and where:

- A conviction has been made for abuse they committed against them.
- Where there has been a finding (for example as part of civil proceedings or a Canonical investigation) that the alleged abuse is proven on the balance of probabilities.

- If the diocese finds, after Independent Case Review(s) allegations of abuse were not investigated or pursued in an appropriate or timely manner. The matter will be investigated without delay.

We are committed to developing the support and service we can offer victims and survivors of abuse and the Diocese is active in finding new approaches to our safeguarding in the Catholic church. We will review this document annually or following any external review or audit where stipulated.

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