

**Guidance for working with survivors of abuse and in managing disclosure.**

1. **The Purpose of this document.**

The purpose of this document is to transparently show how the diocese will deal with disclosures from survivors of abuse, provide support. This is a guide to both Safeguarding staff in the Diocese and to survivors. The document is shared publicly so that those contacting the Diocese know what to expect from the Diocese before making contact.

The below is our commitment to those who contact the Diocese of Lichfield or disclose abuse. Regardless if abuse is recent or happened many years ago, we want to, and aim to respond to survivors in a caring and supportive manor whilst ensuring church safety and compliance with the law is ensured.

1. **We will aim;**

* To listen and believe. We will always start our relationship from a point of believing the person making contact. We will be sensitive, compassionate and always show care.
* Unless advised by a professional or care giver that it will cause harm, If we follow up a historic concerns and have information as to who a survivor is, we will make every effort to speak with that person. We will be sensitive, compassionate and always show care.
* We will always look to provide for pastoral support for a person who approaches us, or who we approach.
* We will consider approaching the Diocese with a request to fund clinical support from a qualified counsellor or psychologist where a person is unable to source support via health services, social care or other route.
* We will respect peoples wishes as far as we can. However, we will need to contact authorities where a crime may have been committed or a current risk to others is identified. The law and church rules do require us to report suspected crime or situations of potential harm to statutory agencies such as Social Care or the Police. We will be transparent with survivors about this.
* We will assist survivors seeking to acquire information required to support legal claims against church or insurance for abuse. We will check our files and records and be transparent about any relevant information.
* We will record survivor’s information sensitively, appropriately, and securely. We will only disclose if a crime has been committed, if we need to share information to keep others safe or if requested to by a consenting adult, parent, guardian. Records may be disclosed to statutory workers with a relevant ‘Request for information’ under data legislation.

1. **Methods for survivors to make contact with the Diocese Safeguarding Team.**

There are many ways to contact our safeguarding team. Any of the following for example can be used.

* *Ask your Parish vicar or safeguarding co-ordinator to refer.*
* *Use contact form on website* [*www.lichfield.anglican.org*](http://www.lichfield.anglican.org/)
* *Telephone 9 to 5 Monday to Friday – 01543 306 030*
* *Out of Hours (including weekends) – 0303 003 1111*
* *Email;* [*safeguarding@lichfield.anglican.org*](mailto:safeguarding@lichfield.anglican.org)

1. **Creating a Safe Church.**

Where we are given information by a survivor that indicates a church or group of people are unsafe, we will use that information to remove whatever the cause of this is, and make sure that church users are safe. We will disclose information within the church to make individuals aware on a need to know bases to accomplish this. We will not share information with people who don’t need to know.

1. **Statutory Engagement.**

Where an incident is being followed up by a statutory agency (such as the Police or Social Services), we will co-operate fully with the lead worker for that agency. We will share information requested and attend meetings and processes as requested.

1. **Working with disclosures from Children.**

Social Care referrals will always be made to the relevant local authority when working with children who make disclosures about abuse. This is a requirement of the Children’s act (1989), that tells us the Welfare of the child is paramount. To access services and support appropriate for children, it will be paramount to involve specialist children’s Social Care services from the Local Authority. We will likewise always involve the Police if we believe a crime has been committed, again we must involve an agency with skills and expertise in such cases. We can not promise to keep secret something that is disclosed to us concerning harm or distress to a child.

1. **with Disclosures from Adults.**

The Capacity act (2005), directs agencies that an adult should be assumed to have capacity to make his or her own decisions, determinations and exert their own individual control and consent over actions. This applies and will always be respected where the issue disclosed does not present a current risk and a crime is not believed to occurred.

However where we believe an abuser continues to represent a risk to a survivor or others, or where we feel a crime may have been committed, we will not be able to promise to keep information confidential. Under such circumstances we will need to contact the Police or Adult Social care to advise. If this occurs we will offer to attend a police station with a survivor if they wish, we will assist with transport to and from a place of interview if required and we will do whatever we can to support them both before and after this. To do this we will likely seek a pastoral worker to assist a survivor in this situation.

Where a survivor of abuse chooses to make their own disclosure to the Police or Social Care (for example about historic abuse), we will do everything we can to support them. We will offer to attend a police station with them, we will assist with transport to and from a place of interview and we will do whatever we can to support them both before and after. To do this we will likely seek a pastoral worker to assist a survivor in this situation.

Where we believe no crime has been committed, and no current risk exists, but we still feel a referral on to the Police, Adult Social Care or the national health services is appropriate, we will ask for your consent to make such a referral, however will be guided by your wishes.

1. **Domestic abuse and violence.**

We will work with men and women who are subject to domestic abuse and violence as survivors of abuse. In addition to the support and expectation above, we have links into Women’s aid, the Pathways Project and other agencies that can assist in seeking support that will be specific to a person in this position. We offer a signposting service to those who are surviving or experiencing Domestic abuse (regardless of this being church related or not).

Our obligations to disclose to protect children, adults, ensure crimes are reported, remain applicable to domestic abuse (as for other forms of abuse).

Direct contact can be made with either the Pathways Project or Womens aid using the information on the following websites.

[*www.pathways-project.co.uk*](http://www.pathways-project.co.uk)

[*www.womensaid.co.uk*](http://www.womensaid.co.uk)

1. **Anonymous disclosure.**

Should you contact us and disclose abuse and choose not to give us your identity, we will do all we can to support you. This for example may involve finding a telephone support contact for you to receive pastoral support. If an anonymous caller discloses a issue of current harm and where this is occurring we will act upon this.

If a caller gives us information about a likely crime or situation of risk we can not identify, we will inform the Police/Social care that we have received this information from an anonymous caller.

1. **Safe Spaces - Alternative for survivors to obtain support.**

As the above sections demonstrates, the Diocese Safeguarding team is required by legislation to report, record and disclose issues of risk and criminal occurrence as required by Law. The Diocese recognises that many survivors may not wish in the first instance to disclose to the Diocese for this reason, and that they may be in a position of seeking third way support.

For this reason the National church has commissioned a independent service called Safe Spaces. Safe Spaces which is run by the Victim Support service, provides a space for survivors to discuss what has happened to them and explore what or if they wish to explore next steps. This can be done anonymously. The service can be contacted using the details below. The Diocese safeguarding team will publicise this service on it's website for those who wish to seek such support.

***Website and live chat -*** [***https://www.safespacesenglandandwales.org.uk/***](https://www.safespacesenglandandwales.org.uk/)

***Telephone – 0300 303 1056***

1. **A request to survivors. Learning and development of our services.**

As has been identified in several reviews and a Public enquiry, the Church of England has not been effective or sensitive in dealing with approaches by survivors disclosing abuse. This statement applies as much to the Diocese of Lichfield as any other area or region in the Church. We want to ensure we continue to improve our responses; we want to get better. However, to do this we need the help and input of survivors to get better.

We would value hearing from you. If you would be interested in helping us to help survivors have a voice, please get in touch with a member of our team. We are seeking people to help us develop policy, strategy and ensure survivors are represented on a variety of task groups and diocese panels.

***Written by;***

***Neil Spiring (Diocese Safeguarding Advisor).***