



An Independent Report into the Experiences
of Victims and Survivors

“DON’T PANIC-BE PASTORAL”

Jasvinder Sanghera CBE

Survivor Advocate

“Whether the perpetrators are alive or dead, survivors must come first...The Church has to get it right. There are no excuses for us for getting it wrong.”

Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby

Contents	Page
Report Introduction/Acknowledgements	3-5
Executive Summary	6-8
Definitions	9
Key Recommendations	10-15
Report Aims/Victim & Survivor Key Themes	16
Main Report Definitions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority Areas • Need for Further Exploration • In depth- Recommendations • Immediate Action Required for Improvement • Observations 	17-60
Consistent Views from Survivors	61
Concluding Thoughts	62
Appendices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letters for engagement • Appendix 1 – DSA/ISVA/NST- Those supporting victims and survivors • Appendix 2 – Letter to seek victim and survivor engagement • Appendix 3 – References 	63-67

Introduction

This is the first report to be produced by me as the Independent Safeguarding Board Survivor Advocate and sets out the role of Survivor Advocate that sits within the Independent Safeguarding Board (ISB), which was created by The Archbishops Council. I have had the privilege of listening to the shared experiences of many survivors over the past four months that have directly informed this report. The title **“Don’t Panic – Be Pastoral”** is a direct quote from a survivor that succinctly encapsulates the experiences and wishes of that community. The message behind the meaning is an acknowledgement and commitment from both Church and survivor, how both cannot accomplish the changes they seek, without working together.

The advocate’s role is central to the work of the ISB and this report as it relates directly to victims and survivors and exists to ensure the experiences and views of both are not only heard by the ISB, but through the ISB’s activities, thereby becoming embedded within CofE safeguarding policy and practice frameworks.

A role of the ISB is to ensure that victims and survivors inform its work. This report is published to ensure that we, the CofE and NST, whose safeguarding work we oversee and advise, all understand survivor, victim, and respondent experiences and to further inform ISB development. In turn, it will also inform the ISB framework model for future engagement. Furthermore, we seek to gain greater insight into how victims and survivors have in the past, and currently continue to engage with and experience the CofE’s safeguarding policy and practice.

This report is informed and underpinned by victim and survivor conversations. These also provide further focus in citing practice and policy areas that impact directly on them. As the ISB’s Survivor Advocate, I have also met with respondents who have faced allegations of abuse. The conversations represented by direct quotes throughout this report extended to hearing the views and experiences of Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs,) Designated Safeguarding Advisors (DSAs,) Diocesan Safeguarding Officers (DSOs) and their teams, and members of the CofE’s National Safeguarding Team (NST). These many roles are central to interfacing with both victims and survivors as they relate to support, advocacy, and engaging with the development of safeguarding policy and practice. The people filling them are ideally placed to speak to any challenges, to address areas that require improvement, to inform present and future good practice models, to seek out and help to fill specific gaps, and to strengthen engagement with victims, survivors, and respondents who have faced allegations of abuse.

Acknowledgements

This report benefits from generous contributions provided by abuse victims, survivors, and survivor groups with first-hand experience of receiving or expecting to receive a safeguarding response from the CofE. These contributions have provided great insight and expertise, both vital to informing this report. The conversations have been time limited taking place over five months, (March – July 2022) aiming to build on and further inform future developments. Close to sixty people have been engaged and their voices and views illustrate and add weight to this report.

All conversations have been confidential meetings and as such, the ISB will not identify anyone. However, this report draws out relevant and consistent themes from these conversations. It also provides relevant content under clear headings related to specific roles.

The ISB wish to acknowledge that though informed by many participants, the conversations captured in this report cannot claim to be representative of all victims, survivors, or respondents. Albeit representative, they are but a sample, all of whom have engaged with processes linked to or have experience of abuse related to the CofE.

The ISB wishes to acknowledge and credit the many working tirelessly to improve safeguarding across the Anglican church - and especially to victims and survivors who, despite the acknowledged need for greater trusting relationships with the CofE, remain hopeful and wish to engage, not only for their personal path to seeking a sense of greater personal peace, but hopeful that the ongoing safeguarding vision and work within the CofE, will bring about the change we all hope to see.

I have been extremely thankful and at times overwhelmed by the willingness of all to engage across the church community, including victims and survivors. I have reams of information which I sincerely wish to share and will continue to do so in my role. However, it has been impossible for me to include all our conversations. I have endeavoured to capture key areas to assist in the development of support, policy and practice impacting on victims, survivors and those that seek to support and advocate on their behalf.

The ISB acknowledge all who have been so giving of their time and the clarity and depth of their contributions. We are especially thankful for the openness and transparency of our conversations. We appreciate how re-telling an experience can be difficult and are therefore even more appreciative that all those who have taken part have been so giving of their experiences. The ISB continues to hear from many who continue to live with trauma. The work that lies behind this report has involved listening attentively and openly to the recounting of personal experiences from those hurt by the church, and what they described as their mistrust of some of the safeguarding work now being driven by the church.

The ISB understands how such experiences have for some sadly led to a mistrust of the ISB, even in this set-up period and the interim stage that is Phase 1 of its work. We ask for your patience and that you judge us by what we will achieve, as we work towards seeking solutions, giving direct and sometimes challenging feedback and advice, strengthening, and embedding improved safeguarding across the CofE.

We are deeply thankful that such a sceptical perception has not inhibited our conversations and wish to reiterate that this report and the ISB itself, are independent. This report is ours in its entirety, and provides an independent view into safeguarding systems, focusing on victims and survivors.

Jasvinder Sanghera CBE

ISB Lead Survivor Advocate

Executive Summary

The Independent Safeguarding Board (ISB) has a significant role to ensure that the experiences of victims and survivors are not only heard, but that they are embedded within and across the CofE safeguarding policy and practice development frameworks. This is the first report from the ISB that aims to provide a window into the experiences of both victims and survivors of church abuse and those alleged of abuse. It has fundamentally been underpinned by their views and extended to those responsible for leadership, policy, practice, and support.

The ISB seeks to provide a window on contemporary practice, offering an insight into how well national and local CofE systems support and engage with victims and survivors. It is clear to me, as the Survivor Advocate, that the CofE continues to be on a journey that requires courage, conviction, and most importantly strong leadership that speaks to the heart of the survivor community. This report echoes the voices of many victims and survivors who despite their experiences have a sheer determination and will to work with the Church, this is a message of hope. This is to their credit, and the CofE must not lose sight of the significance of this willingness, as being an opportunity to build on a foundation of trust, confidence, and the beginnings of an authentic relationship.

It goes without saying that the CofE has made considerable investment towards safeguarding, notably within the NST, however, few victims and survivors of this report have felt the impact of such investment on improving outcomes and their lives. There is no greater time than now for the CofE to question and challenge itself, especially when it has the knowledge that victims and survivors remain distressed and some even suicidal despite the changes in safeguarding policies, processes, and many reviews. It is time to think carefully about what we mean by victim and survivor engagement and how this truly impacts on confidence and safer outcomes. The challenge for the CofE is that despite much investment the same consistent messages from the survivor community of inadequate outcomes remain prevalent.

This report has many important messages, however, the ISB wishes to shine a light on the areas whereby the survivor community were strongest and unified with their voices and therefore this Executive Summary has three important messages.

Firstly, the ISB's analysis of practice brings into sharp focus once again the importance of using our very best resources and skills to give a real and strong voice (and influence) to the survivor community. This report highlights how too often across the safeguarding space there is a failure to grasp and make sense and use of the intrinsically unique identities and life experiences of victims and survivors. We all have the responsibility for creating the conditions in which victims and survivors are not having to repeatedly tell their stories, something which leads to increased mental distress and must be prevented. There is a need to respond quickly to victims and have a less complicated system so that survivors have clear referral pathways supported by a team, including within the NST. This will go a long way to ensuring that victims and survivors receive the right first response and for it to be person centred to provide them with greater comfort and direction, instead of what has often been described as a **'dead end'** or **'passing the buck'** after repeated attempts of support.

Our second core message concerns the urgency of addressing the processes related to the Clergy Discipline Measure and Tribunals. Those engaging in this report from victims, survivors to the advocates that provide support were strong, vocal, and consistent in sharing how this process is the opposite of trauma-informed and is in fact more likely to cause re-traumatisation. We understand that this is an area that is currently under review, however, given the very real accounts and distress of all those that shared their experiences of this process, the ISB request this area of policy is prioritised, and that future consultation must involve those that have experience of the Clergy Discipline Measures (CDM) process and tribunals.

Our final message is about the need to manage sensitively the expectations of victims and survivors. There are many areas of practice whereby expectations are heightened for victims and survivors, including expectations of apologies, consistent communication, being believed and the challenges presented by the Interim Support Scheme (ISS). All these areas create greater anxieties and mistrust for the survivor community, many of which have learnt to be adaptive and resilient, however, it is important for the CofE to alleviate the disappointments born out of such expectations. This report provides clear recommendations that will build on managing expectations which have been informed by victims and survivors. There is a need for greater openness and willingness to act on what victims and survivors are telling us and possibly to now take stock and consider if there is a need for a Victims Charter, to enshrine that all will be treated fairly, equally, with deserving respect and dignity.

We know that there is much more to do to enhance the impact and effectiveness of local and national learning. We hope that this report will contribute to that. Over the next 12 months, the ISB will be looking to strengthen its reach and relationships with the survivor community and all its stakeholders. The ISB will continue to ensure the CofE is held publicly accountable for any failure to respond to the ISB's recommendations, and we now intend to develop a working group to monitor the implementation of this report's recommendations.

The ISB hopes that this report is valuable across the CofE, especially safeguarding leaders, and practitioners in reflecting on the quality and impact of practice with victim and survivors. We believe it is time to not only look to Church leaders for engagement but outside to leaders in the survivor community and committed lawyers who contributed to this report and tirelessly support the survivor community, many who are still waiting to be invited to the table. There is a real willingness to be part of the changes in making the CofE one of the most hopeful and safest places to be, but it will be for the CofE to take this hand.

We end by recognising the commitment of many across the CofE and notably The Archbishops Council who have demonstrated their full support to the journey of the ISB and responded with extraordinary commitment to safeguarding. We firmly believe in the determination expressed by many to change the culture for victims and survivors to become part of the vision. It has perhaps never been more important therefore to take stock and learn to influence the quality and outcome for victim and survivor experiences of safeguarding practice. Looking ahead, the ISB will continue to enhance and diversify the ways it supports the very best standards of safeguarding practice

including through our contribution to overseeing the work of the NST and policy and practice developments.

Definitions

1. Where this report refers to THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND:

The ISB is aware that **“the Church of England”** is not a single body or legal entity, but comprises many office holders, and legal entities which are separately governed, many of which are charities. We refer to **“the Church of England”** as a shorthand and as a means of not having to spell out, recommendation by recommendation, which body is being referred to. The ISB considers safeguarding to be truly everybody’s responsibility. This report reflects that belief. In taking this approach, however, the ISB recognises that it will be a matter for the relevant entity in each case to respond to the recommendations which have its activities in view.

2. Where this report refers to THE ARCHBISHOPS’ COUNCIL (AC):

The Archbishops’ Council (AC) is a body corporate and a registered charity, the trustees of which are registered with the Charity Commission. The NST is a directorate within the AC. The AC is the principal national policy making body in the Church of England and oversees the work of the NST, including the provision of expert advice, guidance and support to dioceses, cathedrals, National Church Institutions, and other Church bodies in respect of safeguarding policy, training, casework and communications, but it is not responsible for all safeguarding practice in the CofE . Such practice is a matter for the office holders and entities which comprise the Church acting subject to nationally agreed policy. The trustees of the AC are responsible for the work done under their remit, and for providing appropriate challenge. Our recommendations seek to encourage such challenge.

3. Victims and Survivors

The ISB have used the term victims and survivors for the purposes of this report. However, we acknowledge and respect that both will choose how they wish to identify themselves and that for some these terms are not appropriate. It remains a fact that for all that share their experiences do so courageously. At the request of the survivor community, the ISB have chosen not to use the term **‘historic or non-recent abuse’**. Many regard this as undermining their experiences as the abuse may have happened in the past, but the pain lives on in the present. The survivor community wish for the Church to learn how to take past disclosures seriously in the present as this will enable all to work towards restoration and freedom from pain.

Summary of Key Report Recommendations

The various systemic cultural issues identified in this report, and the behaviour which they have generated and enabled to flourish over a sustained period, in my view call for certain root and branch reforms.

There are 38 recommendations within this report in which 16 are key, as well as a further 46 secondary recommendations grouped into specific focus areas under lead headings. The recommendation is followed by the action required to improve policy, practice, behaviour and/or culture. Identified within the recommendations is the need for immediate change to better reach, support, and improve responses to victim and survivors.

The main body of the report provides further depth into the key recommendations

Recommendation 1: The need to improve communication across areas of policy and practice that directly reach and impact on victim and survivors

1. The NST must develop a communications plan to raise awareness of the ISS with the Dioceses, using the NST and Safe Spaces websites and a clear link to the new ISB website, including detailing the recent change that enables victims and survivors to access longer-term therapeutic support. The plan must consider reaching victims and survivors that have not yet reported and potentially ongoing general support if this is approved at the upcoming meeting of the AC.
2. The CofE and NST must develop a communication plan specifically related to victims and survivors with key shared consistent messages that should be communicated across the CofE workforce. These communications must reach dioceses, advocates, and lawyers, such as the Association of Child Abuse Lawyers, Safe Spaces, MACSAS, the SRG, Survivors Voices etc.
3. The CofE must develop a victim engagement strategy with agreed consistent, empathic responses for victims and survivors including being taken seriously by demonstrating an understanding of individual situations. This must be developed with victims and survivors using the principles of coproduction.
4. NST, DSA's and others must familiarise themselves with, use and distribute the range of resources available including **"If I told you what would you do?"** and the approaches linked to it. That work should include the material links and approaches being visible on websites. This development will also support the work towards CofE bodies being ever more survivor focused and providing compassionate responses in line with **'Responding to Victims and Survivors of Abuse'**.

Recommendation 2: The need to be consistent and manage expectations of victims and survivors

5. To immediately consult with survivors and agree the development of what a possible mutual agreement between the victim and/or survivor and the supporter, person engaging would contain. This should include realistic expectations, agreed outcomes where possible timescales, intended communication methods and dos and don'ts for both the person being supported and those responding.

6. To immediately develop a practice ensuring all victims and survivors are aware when the perpetrator is to be informed of their disclosures. At this time immediate consideration must be given to how they will be appropriately supported, ideally by a trained safeguarding advocate.

Recommendation 3: Lambeth Palace – Identify the most appropriate leads

7. Lambeth Palace must ensure it effectively communicates its role to dispel the myth and perception that it is CofE headquarters. This could prevent many victims and survivors having to retell their experiences, as Lambeth Palace and its staff are not always the appropriate body. If Lambeth Palace is not the appropriate point of contact, then it should work with those in contact to seek their consent to pass the concerns to the appropriate body.
8. Lambeth Palace must consider a plan to manage the expectations of both victims and survivors. This must include communicating the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury in relation to victims and survivors.
9. Lambeth Palace must be clear about its role in relation to apologies to victims and survivors. If an apology is granted it must be more effective, timelier, and consistent when communicating them. The impact of not doing so has been perceived as a lack of care for victims and survivors.

Recommendation 4: Authorised Listener also known as Link Person

10. The NST must seek assurances from dioceses that all those referred to a Link Person receive full background information related to the person being referred, to prepare and provide appropriate support.
11. The Safe Spaces project must be more widely and determinedly communicated across all the dioceses, and that awareness raising should include Link Persons, who were not aware of this service.

Recommendation 5: Non-current complaints

12. The NST must review and present to AC cases whereby victims and survivors have evidence of past agreed actions that have not been resolved, to seek appropriate resolutions.

Recommendation 6: Interim Support Scheme (ISS)

13. The NSS must immediately introduce Risk and Needs assessments for ISS applicants and ensure that those victims and survivors who apply to the ISS and have suicidal ideation are prioritised and have clear local support plans.
14. The NST with immediate effect, must develop and distribute an accessible leaflet about the ISS, stating clearly setting out its parameters to manage expectations. Ensure this leaflet identifies the progress of the Redress Scheme and where possible, clear timescales, given the ISS is the bridge to the Redress Scheme. The design and wording should be produced in coproduction with victims and survivors and their advocates.

15. The CofE should secure funding for the ISS to support dioceses not able to adequately support victims and survivors of church abuse who are identified as in need of longer-term therapeutic support.
16. NST must develop a process to capture formal feedback from those receiving support from the ISS and this should continue to inform the ISS and future Redress Scheme.

Recommendation 7: Improved Survivor Support

17. The CofE, namely the NST must identify and publicise a clear pathway for victims and survivors that engage with the NST, this should include a team that is able to provide empathic listening to ensure possible first-time disclosures are dealt with effectively.
18. The CofE should create and then carefully curate and keep up to date a central list of registered therapeutic supporters. Its contents should extend to identifying those with experience of supporting victims and survivors of spiritual abuse, and other forms of abuse found predominantly in faith settings, including the CofE. It is noted that this recommendation was one of the original aims of commissioned service Safe Spaces.
19. The CofE must identify a process to collate feedback from victims and survivors who engage with the NST, ISVA and DSA, this should inform further improvements for the NST itself, and for those engaging with NST and Safeguarding professionals.

Recommendation 8: Survivor Chaplaincy and Pastoral Support

20. The CofE must now support the ongoing and long-standing progress related to Survivor Chaplaincy and Pastoral Support, seeing these developments as a priority in developing its approach to victims and survivors. This remains a gap within safeguarding that has been consistently echoed by all.

Recommendation 9: Safe Spaces

21. The NST must provide the ISB with concrete and proven assurance that the survivor community and those who support them are fully engaged with the Rocket Science Safe Spaces Evaluation.
22. The NST provides a final date for the Safe Spaces Evaluation report that will be used to inform the next phase of a survivor focused support service, clearly time-tabled and with an equally clear end date.
23. Any future support victim and survivor service must ensure that those providing support are trained in dealing with all forms of church-based abuse, including spiritual abuse. This should involve victims and survivors and previous service users.
24. The Survivor ISB report should be considered as part of an evidence base for the Rocket Science final Evaluation Report on the pilot phase, given the consistency of concerns brought to the ISB related to the current service, from both the survivor community and those supporting them.
25. The CofE and Safe Spaces Trustees must identify how the ISB are able to develop governance and oversight arrangements of the NST in relation to the Safe Spaces project. This is a gap

and the ISB has a role to evaluate the significant Safe Spaces project, which remains a core support service for victims of church abuse.

Recommendation 10: Church Lawyers and Insurers

26. The NST must seek the immediate views of the survivor community in relation to their experiences with church lawyers acting for its insurers to ensure they are receiving the best possible service.
27. The NST must seek assurances in the form of evidence from the survivor community, that lawyers engaged by the church and their insurers have regard for the views of victims and survivors that further informs their practice.

Recommendation 11: Better Processes and Policies

28. Develop a survivor support strategy that ensures dioceses have effective and adequately resourced referral mechanisms in place for victims and survivors in need of longer-term therapeutic support into the ISS.
29. NST must urgently develop an easily accessible guide for survivors providing clear information about the role of Serious Case Management Groups (SCMG). This must include what a SCMG can and cannot do. The risk of not communicating this early leaves the victim or survivor less informed and can be disempowering. This process must involve victims and survivors who have experienced SCMG (or Core Groups as they were previously known).
30. The CofE should immediately develop an Ethics Policy that defines the essentials of how all employees will interact with victim and survivors. This must instil in its mission and values a zero-tolerance approach to any form of abuse, which applies to its clergy, staff, and volunteers as much as to its service users.

Recommendation 12: Improve Clergy Discipline Measure process and experiences of Tribunals

31. The CofE must ensure those involved in the tribunal process are fully informed in good time and supported appropriately. This must include devising a leaflet on the process of a tribunal and making clear the process and the difference between a survivor putting forward their own complaint, or someone from the diocese e.g., Archdeacon or the DSA being the complainant and what the possible consequences are for the victim and survivor.
32. The church must immediately ensure victim/survivor anonymity in accordance with the law and best practice. This will include providing written assurance of anonymity if the survivor requests this and if this is breached the matter should accordingly be investigated in good time. This process should be considered as a priority to protect survivors and for cases of sexual violence and abuse so that witnesses in a tribunal case can be assured of their right to anonymity prior to giving evidence.
33. The CofE must ensure all victims and survivors are provided with the option of Special Measures in good time. This must be clearly communicated to ensure they have the option of a screen if they are to give evidence in person, separate waiting rooms in a witness area

and separate toilet facilities and ensure the victim and survivor is protected from view of the Respondent which includes proximity. These Special Measures should be based upon those which have been put in place for court proceedings to support vulnerable and intimidated witnesses to give their best possible evidence in court. Also, to ensure that such measures help to relieve some of the stress associated with giving evidence.

34. The church must ensure victims are fully supported throughout the tribunal process by providing appropriate support with a clear timetable for the victim and survivor to be prepared for the tribunal hearing, e.g., to be shown around the hearing room or provide photographs of the room, set up of the room etc.
35. There is an immediate need to establish a clear resourced plan regarding CDM consultation with victims and survivors, this should be prioritised and developed in conjunction with survivors that have been through a tribunal and with a clear end date. This consultation should inform current practice to improve outcomes for those entering a CDM process.
36. All victims and survivors must be provided with a clear timetable in relation to the outcome of tribunal decisions and how this will be communicated - this must be in good time and if there is a delay the reasons for this must be consistently communicated.
37. Ensure that when publishing the judgement, the victim and survivor are informed either first or at the same time as other parties. This must be undertaken with care and compassion by a person with appropriate knowledge of the case.

Recommendation 13: Improvements of NST engagement with victims and survivors

38. CofE to adopt a Person-Centred Approach (PCA) across the CofE and this should be prioritised within the NST to improve responses to victims and survivors.
39. The CofE should direct the NST to establish a Quality Assurance Framework to monitor trauma informed responses to victims and survivors. This should detail key performance indicators that are quantifiable to measure and evaluate the impact and improvements of responses.
40. The NST must establish a clear referral pathway for victims and survivors contacting the NST as the first port of call. This pathway must include those working with survivors to refer into the NST. This should be communicated across dioceses and on all relevant websites to encourage and expand survivor engagement
41. The CofE and NST must ensure the website is clearly accessible to victims and survivors and easier to navigate with plain language. This must include clear guidance on what support is available and the role of the NST which was important to all.

Recommendation 14: Transparency and clarity of purpose

42. The prevailing culture and behaviours shared by victims and survivors have not been conducive to an open and supportive culture to ensure they are treated with dignity and respect; the CofE must organise a victim and survivor consultation of those that have completed a CDM Tribunal this will be vital to hearing the experiences from those that have shared not having the opportunity to provide their account of abuse and/or be questioned

on this. These views will be important to ensuring all victims and survivors are treated equally and fairly.

43. The NST should develop a plan and opportunities for organisational learning such as debriefing all involved in processes to ensure they remain victim centred. This plan must seek evidence of change to be assured of improvements for victims and survivors.

Recommendation 15: Person Centred Approaches

44. The CofE musts adopt a Person-Centred Approach (PCA) across the CofE, and this should now be prioritised within the NST
45. The CofE and NST must implement past good practice events recommendations that have been developed with survivors and highlight the need to ensure a PCA /responses across the CofE and NST

Recommendation 16: Building on Compassionate Responses

46. The NST, dioceses and others must familiarise themselves with, use and distribute the range of resources available including **“If I told you what would you do?”** and the approaches linked to it. That work should include the materials links and approaches being visible on websites. This development will also support the work towards CofE bodies being ever more survivor focused.

Report Aims

This report makes recommendations related to areas of policy, practice, and procedure that require immediate and longer-term improvement. The request for these changes has come directly from victims and survivors and must be heard if the Church is to improve its safeguarding arrangements and build on the approach of compassion and confidence with victims and survivors.

Inconsistent communication is triggering for some. The need for agreed timescales and those that engage with victims and survivors to provide an environment of safety and the need for non-judgemental and person-centred responses, has been a reoccurring theme throughout conversations.

The report's recommendations clearly identify themes that require further exploration, observations, and assurance for the ISB within areas that impact on the lives of victims and survivors. The ISB aims to provide a document that will remain work in progress and will require the ISB to seek assurances to further monitor the implementation of progress.

Please note that those who took part shared differing definitions for how they identified themselves. The ISB also acknowledge definitions of the survivor community are often different from those developed by professionals. Hence the importance to ensure we all respect and communicate how an individual identifies. This report will not go into individual definitions, however, we will be using the term victims and survivors and referring to those with lived experiences, all of which share an experience of church abuse and/or abuse whereby they have sought support from the Church, and this includes those alleged of misconduct.

This report finally documents, from as many perspectives as possible, what works, with an aim to provide greater insight into providing effective help and support for victims and survivors of church abuse, their reasons for seeking help, and the importance of being listened to, believed, and respected throughout their journey to recovery. The conversations captured in this report reinforce the need to allow victims and survivors to engage with support services on their own terms whilst managing their expectations.

Next Steps

The ISB will publish an updated report within 12 months, to monitor and evidence progress of the recommendations.

Main Report

Conversations With Those with Lived Experiences of Church Abuse:

Key Areas Explored

- Experiences of reporting disclosures
- Apologies
- What worked well in terms of effective support and good practice
- How victims and survivors believe they are perceived by the CofE
- Experiences of support offered by Safe Spaces
- What victim and survivors believe to be the way forward?
- Reoccurring themes shared by majority during conversations
- Managing expectations
- Pastoral support
- Communication
- Safe spaces

“We have an institutional memory when finding the courage to disclose, sadly some, forget the child in that past who is very present at that time of disclosing”

“When we come forward it is because we are in crisis, this does not diminish if we are reporting non-recent abuse”

“The Church must learn how to take past disclosures seriously in the present. Until that happens it is impossible to find restoration and freedom from pain”

Conversations led to survivors sharing experiences of differing responses when reporting non-recent abuse. There remains a need to ensure those responding to such disclosures ensure responses are consistent, compassionate, and given the same urgency as recent abuse.

Engagement with and the awareness of The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) provided a platform for many to share their experiences. Perhaps most importantly, it gave those with lived experiences greater courage to come forward and disclose. My conversations highlighted how victims and survivors perceive terms and the language used by those working in safeguarding representing the CofE. A consistent theme was how many refer to the accepted terms of ‘non-recent’ or ‘historical’ abuse. It is a fact that both terms refer to past events. However, for those with lived experiences of church abuse, these terms did not reflect the experiences for them, still live in the present day. It is important to acknowledge such trauma continues and recounting such experiences can be triggering.

We should all accept that disclosing abuse both past and present takes immense courage, it is important to understand how for some it can take them straight back to the experience as if the abuse were happening today.

Furthermore, some survivors felt these experiences were not only undermined by comments such as **“that was then, and it would not happen now”** but that it diminishes their real-life experiences of abuse.

This further supports the work needed to overcome the attitudes such as quoted below, that can be perceived as diminishing the disclosure and experiences for those that report:

“You can’t be in a position of punishing a person for how they handled a safeguarding concern in the 1980’s” NST

“Yes, it was handled badly back then but it is different now and survivors need to accept this” NST

Observations and questions

How are those working across the church assured that non-recent abuse disclosures are given the same level of urgency as recent disclosures?

Do those engaging with victims and survivors understand the significance of appropriate language when referring to non-recent abuse? E.g., those with lived experiences shared how they do not wish the term ‘historical abuse’ to be used.

How are CofE bodies assured that consistent and acceptable language is used in speaking and writing to, or about, victims and survivors?

Interim Support Scheme (ISS)

The Archbishops’ Council established the ISS in September 2021, the scheme having initially operated as a pilot since October 2020. The scheme seeks to address the immediate short-term needs of survivors and victims of abuse with support offered initially for up to six months, with the possibility of consideration of additional support for a further six months. A core aim was to improve the church’s approach to all survivors of church-related abuse and is part of the church’s recognition that harm has been caused by the abuse. It is intended to provide a framework to ensure support is provided to survivors whose life circumstances have been significantly affected by abuse. To date, sixty victims and survivors have approached the scheme, of whom have received offers of financial assistance totalling over £880,000. There is no specific budget for ISS, however it clearly has the full support of the Archbishops’ Council.

The vision for this scheme was built on great generosity that laid its foundation. It has also contributed to increasing expectations of support held by victims and survivors whilst they wait in what has been described by some as being in the ‘wilderness of the Redress Scheme’. This more firmly established and permanent scheme will take over from the ISS to a projected timetable of 2023, though an exact start date is not yet certain, and it appears that the full Scheme will not be operational until 2024 so interim support is essential.

The following examples provide an insight into the experiences of waiting in such a wilderness:

Mr X receives ongoing support from ISS and is struggling waiting for the completion of the Redress Scheme, which will not be in place until an unconfirmed date in 2023. He has had several meetings with personnel at varying levels, but he is struggling. Mr X is now wishing to complain as he wants people to hear about his struggle which his advocate also shares.

What is evident is that for such victims/survivors there is nothing the ISS can do to financially assist them beyond the terms of the ISS, and though this is not the intention, it results in a further substantive negative impact on some survivors' mental well-being.

Further Exploration Is Required

What other forms of support including possible pastoral support, could be offered to survivors in this position?

How does the ISS ensure the mental well-being of those on the scheme is being monitored for their personal safety?

Both victims, survivors and those leading in this area acknowledge that the ISS is positive for all, however, that it was put together in haste and this also meant sacrificing due diligence. The examples cited relate to there being no rules at the start, so no clear parameters and how gradual formal rules followed on and this has led to setting precedents, and some are still being evidenced today. This has also created challenges for the ISS as some challenge the equity and therefore, fairness of the scheme when applying and expressing their needs.

Voices of Victims and Survivors

"It has been a really helpful scheme"

"I like that it does not ask for lots of detailed information"

"The Terms of Reference suddenly changed, and this was mortifying and dangerous, you cannot just pull things, think of the impact"

"Terms of Reference changed and there was NO consultation with survivors, another example of how a policy area that is significant to us, does not think to include us"

The Terms of Reference for the ISS have been updated and were presented to and agreed by the AC in September 2021. During 2022, further discussions have led to the ending of an automatic cut-off point after two rounds of six months of financial support. This is for those victims and survivors in need of longer-term therapeutic support, this was and remains a welcome change by the survivor community.

Most survivors, including those that lead survivor groups taking part in conversations with the ISB for this report, expressed their disappointment at not being consulted on past changes given the fact that the scheme is a core scheme designed to support them. Some of the changes agreed in 2021 impacted negatively on some survivors, leading to greater frustration, anxiety, and less faith in how the CofE and the NST truly have regard for survivors given the significance of such a policy area in some people's lives.

Further Exploration/Questions - Consultation Assurance

What is the process for ensuring consultation with victims and survivors in significant policy areas (for example, the ISS or reforms to the CDM) which directly impact on victims and survivors?

How does the NST gather and act upon the views of victims and survivors where they are disappointed with consultations, due to not being involved or due to other reasons, such as being informed of consultations at short notice?

There remains a need to be cognisant of the challenges for both ongoing recipients of the Interim Support Scheme's resources, and those managing their expectations. The ISB recognises this is an area that impacts on victim and survivors themselves, and those seeking to support those who may be struggling whilst awaiting the completion and launch of the Redress Scheme. At the heart of conversations in this area was one in which many vividly described the devastating impact on their mental well-being. All victims and survivors described their trauma. This often results in immediate triggering, depression, and anxiety, both heightened when engaging with those in positions representing the CofE, especially when seeking support.

Some shared how they had been on the edge of suicide before considering reporting or applying for support. One survivor shared his experiences of church abuse and subsequent trauma that led to a need for rehabilitation due to a breakdown. This case also highlights how promises of support, followed by clear actions, were made in the past and then not followed through - leaving the survivor further impacted. In such cases, survivors are left both holding the responsibility of dealing with what was agreed, and further aggrieved by being let down again.

The ISB has been made aware of such cases that remain outstanding. We therefore strongly recommend the CofE learns from these cases and seeks resolutions to support survivors where there is evidence of agreed but unfulfilled actions. The ISB believes that not to do so will have an adverse continuing impact on the vision of building a trusting relationship with victims and survivors.

Further Exploration Is Required by ISS Lead

How many victims and survivors in receipt of support from ISS, have past agreed actions outstanding?

How many victims or survivors applying to the scheme have experienced suicide ideation?

If there are trends related to serious issues, how are they communicated and responded to by the NST and senior leaders?

Where survivor experiences have led to mental health breakdowns and subsequent rehabilitation, is this funded by the ISS?

Recommendation 1

The AC should review cases whereby victims and survivors have evidence of past agreed actions that have not been resolved, to seek resolutions.

The NST should ensure that those victims and survivors who apply to ISS and have suicidal ideation have clear local support plans in place.

There are challenges faced by those with a role in responding to victims and survivors, and given the complexity of some cases, some have no alternative but to involve those at a more senior level to seek solutions. This can create delays, which can lead to victims and survivors being further aggrieved leading to them raising complaints to seek answers. They now often wish to direct such complaints to the ISB, which is not presently able to address individual complaints.

During our conversations, survivors and their advocates shared what can only be described as their despair at feeling hopeless at times. They have requested the active advocacy of the ISB on their behalf, which again the ISB is not remitted to provide. This position can create further unease for victims and survivors, who feel they have come to the end of a road. It also contributes to the view that some victims and survivors are forming of the ISB, namely its inability to truly be able to provide independence and influence policy that will require immediate attention including changes to practices on the ground.

Whilst the ISB acknowledges this to be the view of some, we believe it is a mistaken view. The overall aim of the ISB, certainly in Phase 1 (to the end of 2023) is to provide an independent challenge to the CofE so that it will determinedly seek solutions that will provide improvements in safeguarding practice and policy. We acknowledge the pain and trauma of victims and survivors and are ensuring that all our work can be strongly informed by them as the ISB endeavours to become part of the solution.

Conversations with victims and survivors have reinforced the views of those victims and survivors waiting in anticipation for the Redress Scheme to be up and running, for whom in the meantime there is nothing in place that can assist them further financially beyond the terms of the Interim Support Scheme. This is clearly an area that creates a lack in confidence for many, given some interpret this as the CofE not responding to or being compassionate about their immediate needs, which the ISB acknowledges may continue to impact on the CofE's ability to build and sustain trusting and meaningful relationships with victims and survivors.

ISS – Areas for Consideration

The ISB sincerely acknowledges the tireless work of all those who have worked to develop and are currently supporting the implementation of the ISS. There have been numerous audits and reviews of this scheme, leading to improvements since the scheme was first established. The ISB therefore understand this remains a work in progress.

This section will consider the views of those who remain impacted by the scheme and are also connected to implementing the ISS and those advocating on behalf of victims and survivors.

Exit Plans

There is no written plan regarding an exit strategy for those supported by the scheme, meaning this could lead to dependency on the scheme. There is a need to consider discussions with those who are benefiting from or currently supported by the scheme in advance of their leaving that support behind, to ensure a support plan is there for them beyond the ISS. The risk of not considering this will be greater for those accessing the scheme later with a sense that it may not be there for them for long; and may impact further on the building of a trusting relationship between them and the wider CofE and/or the NST.

Those running the scheme should consider how the ISS can support the exit of those in receipt of support, after 12 months, though we also recognise that the difficulties concerned have led the CofE to consider means of extending support beyond that single point of exit. This should be planned well in advance of their exiting the scheme to ensure an appropriate transition to local and/or national support. This may include the planned and careful handovers of individuals to statutory services and should include a planned exit with a monitored support plan.

Improvements in Communication

At the first point of enquiry to the ISS a lot of information is provided to the person, which also includes privacy notices and legal documents which can be extremely technical. This information should be easily accessible to the person reading it, who may be in distress and find engagement with very official language daunting.

The ISB acknowledges the recent change in victims and survivors being able to access therapeutic support outside 12 months, this being a significant and most welcome change. This flexibility of timings will help to support those in need and especially those who have been advocating for more support, so that survivors do not have to fund their own support. However, this change in policy has not been widely communicated. This, in the view of the ISB, is a missed opportunity. This change in policy and practice represents a clear example of how the church is listening and responding to the needs of those with lived experiences who have been harmed by the church and therefore, it should be widely and persistently communicated.

All DSAs/ISVAs interviewed in preparation of this report stated that there was a need for more awareness and communication about this scheme, and that this communication and public awareness needed to be easily visible and accessible across all CofE websites and in all dioceses.

Recommendation 2

Develop and distribute an accessible leaflet about the ISS, including being clear about what it can and cannot achieve, to manage expectations. Ensure this leaflet clearly refers to the progress of the Redress Scheme and where possible, clear timescales.

Promote the ISS amongst the Dioceses on the NST and Safe Spaces websites, with a clear link also on the new ISB website, including communicating the recent change in therapeutic support.

Further Questions/Exploration is Required

If the Dioceses do not have the funds, should they be supported to help people to apply to ISS for longer term emotional support?

“I was on a cliff edge when my safeguarding advisor applied, and I was on the edge of suicide. She managed to advocate for this support as they could not afford it in the Diocese, but not everyone has a X (advocate was named). She made them understand that it was my therapist keeping me alive” Survivor applying to ISS

The ISB has been listening to the challenges faced by many dioceses in the course of its work, and a report on the issues raised will follow. In the meantime, this report provides greater insight into these challenges of supporting victims and survivors, including how some dioceses, it is clear, are not able to offer longer term therapeutic support. This, as those interviewed for this report were clear, was due to local finances and there simply not being enough money in the budget. This work has also highlighted the fact that not all dioceses are equal in this regard. This remains a concern as it means both that not all victims and survivors who have experienced church abuse will be able to access longer term support, and that support is therefore inconsistent across the country.

Those supporting victims and survivors across dioceses were aware of the ISS, but they did not consider seeking support from the scheme for those in need of longer-term support, particularly when they did not have a budget themselves, or a budget that was limited.

Recommendation 3

Explore the position of Dioceses in relation to referring victims and survivors in need of longer-term therapeutic support into the ISS.

Increase awareness of ISS to ensure understanding and reach to victims and survivors. This should include ensuring communication across dioceses.

Administration of ISS

The Secretary to the ISS works full time on the ISS. The Safeguarding Administrative Assistant dedicates 40% of their time on the Scheme. The Redress Scheme Project Manager dedicates 30-50% of their time on the Scheme depending on the demand each week.

Victims and survivors make initial enquires but may equally make follow up calls and there is an automatic 7-day time limit for a reply. There is very little time for listening to conversations, yet it must be noted that those who enquire may be in deep distress and it may have taken a great amount of courage to seek support, meaning that such time is needed, for both the enquirer and the staff taking the calls. This is an area that requires further improvement. For the scheme to work to be most effective there should be a team that can respond efficiently and promptly so that those seeking guidance are responded to immediately and without undue further distress.

The impact of an automatic response in 7 days in this circumstance, could also be a cause of further distress for those seeking support. The ISS is the key support scheme for victims and survivors. Therefore, there is a need to have consistent responses that include the timely follow up of enquiries being made. It is important to understand that those seeking such support will be doing so with a background of sometimes long-lived distress, meaning a delay can be both triggering and

retraumatising. Many of those applying to the scheme may start from a position of fear and mistrust. The need to have trained listeners at this point, who can give immediate and consistent clear responses, is key.

“The Interim Support Scheme could become overwhelmed then what?” NST Members

“The Christian faith community is called to bring hope to the broken-hearted. When people are hurt and damaged, we should be a model of how to respond well and how to care deeply. We are called not to shy away from those who are hurting” Escaping the Spiritual Maze p.4

The ISB believes this question requires further immediate exploration, as avoiding answering this question, could impact on reaching those harmed by the church, given feedback for this report indicates that many may not yet have reported to or sought help from the ISS. Furthermore, exploring this question will further support the management of expectations of those seeking to access the scheme. This question cannot be avoided. From exploring this area of policy and practice for this report, the ISB believes there remains a pressing need to reach those in need of support who have been harmed by the church and may or may not yet have approached the ISS. Answering the question above should remain a priority.

It may be the case that the ISS could become overwhelmed by increased demand as those in need become aware of it. If this is the case and given the CoFE promised to set up the scheme and develop its successor Redress Scheme, this is a question that requires honest exploration and solution finding that can create lasting provision. Not to do so may cause further harm and distress to those in need of the scheme, impact on reporting, and further frustration for and stress on those trying to make the schemes work for the benefit of all.

Further Questions/Exploration Is Required

How can the team responding to first enquiries to the ISS ensure that all responses are timely and those wishing to access the scheme and require follow up are not given an auto response of 7 days, given their distress may need immediate action?

Can the team be expanded to include a person with lived experience and/or a DSA equivalent who has the experience of offering support? All those providing support to victims and survivors should be appropriately trained by specialist organisations, including those experienced in understanding abuse in childhood.

What provisions or plans have been considered for the potential for increased demand on the ISS if it is better publicised as the ISB recommends?

All those who respond to ISS enquires should be supported to have the time for listening conversations, be trained in listening skills, and have access to good – where necessary clinical – supervision given the distress they may have to deal with as enquirers make their first or subsequent approaches.

Formal Feedback

There is no formal ISS collection of feedback from those who sought support but who were not successful in accessing the scheme. The ISB believes such feedback is central to hearing the experiences of service users and to continually improving the scheme and should be collated by the NST to further inform the scheme’s ongoing development and the creation of the Redress Scheme.

Such information is an example of another entry point that will be invaluable in informing the NST's vision and its programme of work with victims and survivors.

Recommendation 4

NST should develop a form for formal feedback from those receiving support from the scheme. This should also include collating anonymised data related to the number of applicants, assistance provided, and this information should be published.

There should now be a discussion that answers the question: Is it time to drop the word 'interim,' or call it The Support Scheme with a sub-heading explanation that it provides interim support, so that when the Redress scheme succeeds it there is simply a need to change the subheading and contents?

It could be argued that the ISS is no longer 'interim' given it is the support scheme for the CofE that victims and survivors have been accessing for almost three years. Some have shared that it may now be time to consider rebranding this scheme in consultation with survivors and to clearly communicate it to be the support scheme, whilst clearly reporting on the progress of the Redress Scheme and migrating the policy and practice from the former to the latter at the appropriate and agreed moment.

Managing Expectations

Conversations for this report, and my personal observations over my three years of safeguarding policy work in other areas of the CofE, have led me to understanding that the commitment to safeguarding across the broader church is unquestionable, and is to be commended. However, there is also a difficult and delicate issue of the CofE being so concerned that it risks over 'promising' when it comes to victims and survivors, with the resultant negative impact of not delivering on the promises being made. This impact was clearly illustrated by members of the survivor community during conversations leading to this report. Sadly the "over promise and under deliver" experiences that can follow contribute further to a sense of mistrust and a lack of confidence with safeguarding amongst many in the survivor community who engaged in the work towards this report. The perception of these shortcomings risk undoing all the vision and could undermine the exceptional safeguarding work the CofE is trying to achieve, and indeed which is evident in many parts of the country.

The psychological dynamics of the relationships involved, especially from the point of view of many in the survivor community, appears to be misunderstood. This can be evidenced using various examples but is at its most pointed in survivors' minds when drawing on the roles of Senior Clerics, as some can find themselves caught up in a 'rescue and then over promise' dynamic. This phenomenon has resulted in an increase of expectations amongst those seeking support, justice, and for some closure that may not be achievable in the cold light of day. It is the case that some survivors have been promised outcomes that will support them and some of these promises have not been delivered which is immensely distressing for the victim and survivor, and for both the clerics involved and staff in organisations such as the NST.

This - in effect creates a lack of confidence created by a rush to be seen to try to help which can result in such senior clerics being far less confident than they need to be in setting and maintaining appropriate boundaries such as those expected, for example, in services and professionals in the statutory safeguarding sector, for either children or adults. The ISB has listened to numerous survivors who have shared how promises were made and then they were informed how they could not be met, leaving them further aggrieved by the church, with some of them detailing the devastating impact on their already poor mental health. Whereas a rational discussion around managing expectations might have lessened that effect, where such discussions do not take place, the sense of everybody setting themselves up to fail is palpable in what survivors told the ISB as part of their participation. The damage done to clerics and others' emotional and mental wellbeing in such circumstances should also not be underestimated.

Priority

The ISB believes this to be an area that requires urgent attention. No matter how good the intention, not to have boundaries in practice and over-promising through poor management expectation with traumatised victims and survivors causes greater harm on all sides.

The key question is therefore how does, and with training and support how should, the CofE manage the expectations of victims and survivors?

“Healing is at the heart of Christianity, people have every right, then, to expect the Church to be a place of safety and healing” To Heal and Not to Hurt p14

All victims and survivors shared how they simply want to know, honestly always, where they stand, with an accepted need for clear initial rules of engagement, and equally clear boundaries. There was an acknowledgement by participants regarding how the institution had failed them, leading to a need for boundaries on all sides This in turn would also work towards rebuilding relationships of trust.

Such healthy boundaries are also necessary components for self-care, again on all sides. Such boundaries in practice, between survivor and responding staff or clerics, are especially strongly required. Not having them can leave people, on either side of the relationship, feeling depleted, taken advantage of, taken for granted, or intruded upon. Whether in work or our personal relationships, poor boundaries can lead to resentment, hurt, anger, and burnout. The keen sense of this happening in real time has been evident during all my conversations with victims and survivors, and sometimes with those taking the role of responding, either because they have been accused, or they are employed or charged to work with a survivor's hurt.

All ISB members, working in their wider societal safeguarding roles, have identified in formal reviews or legal processes in those settings how a lack of boundaries in practice contributes to the frustrations discussed below. These often come from the survivor community and are equally often brought to the table at the point of initial engagement. Furthermore, the need for responders to be honest, realistic, and consistent has come through strongly during the work undertaken for this report, as it does in wider safeguarding work in society in which the ISB's members are involved.

Many victims and survivors in crisis, reporting non-recent abuse, will be living with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and this means that setting boundaries is crucial though it can also be difficult. The conversations held during preparation for writing this report led to many of those who engaged sharing both their trauma, and how they are commonly plagued

by feelings of guilt, shame, or worthlessness because of the abuse concerned, be it past or present. It has taken all those disclosing in these confidential conversations courage to stand up and work with us on this report, and to set boundaries as they do so. Therefore, it is more important in work done with them to set such boundaries, and for people to respect them.

The conversations in which survivors and respondents alike engaged in this work has demonstrated its importance. There is an equal need to ensure all agreements between all parties include the explicit description of boundaries that cannot be broken, forgotten, or ignored. Having to set and then later repeat personal boundaries is exhausting for those living with trauma. This makes setting and sustaining such boundaries imperative.

All who took part agreed that a formal mutual agreement between the person being supported, and the supporter, would always benefit both. It would provide greater assurance, boundaries being lived out in practice, and clarity for victims, survivors and those charged with working with them, especially when the victim or survivor is searching for or chasing responses.

The following (often repeated) questions were voiced by all of those who spoke to us, who had made disclosures to and sought support from the CofE:

“Please, tell me what you can and what you cannot do!”

“What is going to happen next?”

“Who is doing what?”

“Please do not pass me around, and understand how it feels to retell your story”

“Help me to know where I stand and where I don’t and not feel as if I am being bloody nuisance”

“It is key at the beginning to know where we stand”

“Let’s agree TOR e.g., getting back to me, and saying what you can and cannot do etc this would not feel like a tick box approach”

“This could include how to conclude/endings and an evaluation”

“All we want is to be treated fairly, consistently and be confident in the process”

“We don’t want to have to keep challenging but it is not a level playing field”

“Be clear, where does advocacy start and finish?”

The following were regarded as important to managing expectations for victims and survivors. The ISB also believes this to be a step towards creating boundaries that will support the safety and wellbeing of all concerned.

1. Ask us for clarification, be clear.
2. Do not answer emails outside of office hours.
3. Set and reiterate expectations for us both.
4. Explain what is going to happen next and put this in writing and if you promise a time to respond, adhere to this.
5. Understand the impact of the response NFA (no further action) - How does this leave a victim and survivor feeling when there is no follow up? Even a brief explanation for the

decision would help. There is often a need to refer victims and survivors for support and the ISS/NST should consider identifying relevant support charities that provide appropriate support, this should be an updated list of national and local providers

6. Ensure the person feels heard and if you do not have the answer to the question, tell us and help us find it, do not pass us on.
7. Offer alternatives and if there are none, be honest: We know authenticity when we feel it.
8. Always explain the reasoning behind the current situation or decision.
9. If there is an issue, we can refer to TOR which have been mutually formed, as these define both our expectations.
10. We do not expect you to give us closure, but let's agree where the process, including support, begins and ends.

There is also the need for those responding to agree boundaries. This must also be based on what is and is not achievable in their role. For example, the following could be considered, but developing this will require further exploration.

1. Asking people not to call out of hours unless it is your role to be available then.
2. Being clear when you will check your emails and clearly communicating when you are not available.
3. Saying no if something is not achievable and explaining why.
4. Bringing up a boundary violation straight away.
5. Including in the agreement with the victim/survivor your expectations, whilst acknowledging the trauma they bring to this space.

Recommendation 5

Consult with survivors and agree what a possible mutual agreement between the person to be supported and the supporter could contain.

The following are examples from survivors, but this list requires broader input:

“It should be agreeable to both, be realistic, agree how we both expect to be treated, be clear about what you aim to do and importantly what you cannot do, agree how you will communicate and if you are on leave or not available how you will communicate this and say what happens in your absence”.

The ISB also recognises the very real issues relating to those working in this field and often being at the sharp end of a survivor's pain and distress manifesting itself as potentially being abusive and critical of those seeking to provide support. It was clear that some of those responding to victims and survivors at times are struggling to manage their own expectations of being able to help or even to put things right. Many referred to **‘compassion fatigue.’** This was expressed in their feeling of helplessness, hopelessness, or powerlessness when advocating or managing expectations for those who have been hurt by the church.

The ISB is concerned that not addressing these issues could lead to burnout, general exhaustion, and lack of motivation amongst staff, a situation that would be to the detriment of their offer of services and support to survivors and victims. Those working with victims and survivors will be hearing, many of them daily, experiences of abuse. Some may experience vicarious trauma, or the triggering of their own difficulties from their own life experiences.

The overarching commitment of those working with victims and survivors came through clearly from those who spoke to the ISB. Some shared how frustrating it was for them not to be able to achieve more for the survivor community, due to budgetary, capacity, policy, or practice limitations. Furthermore, the ISB acknowledges that some policy areas are currently being reviewed and are therefore still under development. There is a need to have clear timescales for policies and service offers which will directly impact on victim and survivors, as many become frustrated with processes and the creation of a cycle of mistrust exacerbating difficult relationships.

This report leads us to consider further areas concerning victims, survivors and/or third parties who may be very challenging, or persistently disrespectful, to CofE bodies and church staff. The ISB has identified how sadly for some of these officials or staff members this has included being named and ridiculed publicly, including in the media. Those who shared such experiences also felt a reluctance to share as they did, due to the fact they accepted and recognised there are few, not many, who may behave in this way. It was clear they also understood that there are often underlying factors behind an individual's behaviour, and that their aim was always seek constructive solutions. This reluctance to discuss these difficulties also contributed to staff feeling that at times they were treading on eggshells when engaging with victims and survivors, and statements that there was a need for equal and mutual regard, given they are doing their jobs to improve safeguarding and cannot be held personally responsible for the past failings of the CofE.

“Everyone is treading on eggshells” NST member

“We are not in a good place to say no, due to history we are deemed to be morally bankrupt” Bishop

“There is a fear of being destroyed by engagement with survivors” NST

“There is an urgent policy needed, to bring in an expectation of dignity and tolerance at work and we have been asking for a communication statement on many occasions, but it is not a priority” NST member

The ISB acknowledges that any such abuse should not be tolerated. We are also aware how for staff facing them, such experiences can feel overwhelming, especially if the attacks are personal or include – as some do – extreme expressions of anger, swearing, or unfounded accusations towards staff. The ISB is clear in stating that such behaviour is unacceptable and must not be tolerated, regardless of anybody's traumatic personal experiences.

The ISB appreciates the difficulty for some staff in sharing such experiences, as they described how this behaviour can be intimidating in the extreme. Although there is clear and available support within management structures, they pointed out that they are human, and are not the cause of the pain that is being directed as fury at the CofE.

The ISB also acknowledges past reports identifying this difficult area such as the report by The Social Care Institute for Excellence and the Church of England (2019). This identified the isolation of many DSAs from other safeguarding professionals as being a distressing feature of the working life of many DSAs. When put in the context of longstanding challenges of safeguarding in the church, when this loneliness and isolation are linked to a culture of deference towards clergy and the oft-cited prioritisation of reputation, the image of a lone, isolated DSA is highly problematic and a cause for concern.

Those willing to share despite their reservations represented roles in Lambeth Palace, NST and GDPR team. Their roles were often perceived by the survivor community as being complicit with the church, given an environment in which these victims and survivors were expressing pain as individuals hurt by the church. Some staff were clear that such unpleasantness can also at times, sadly, come from clergy or others in positions of pastoral authority or leadership.

The ISB considers that the impact of such behaviour on those affected cannot be underestimated. Hearing these experiences reinforces the need to develop an immediate response in the form of a policy framework of dignity and wellbeing at work. This should explicitly spell out what will and will not be tolerated. It should be effectively communicated so that this message is not only heard but consistently actioned.

This area of policy development could be included in the work related to managing expectations. It will be important for all staff to not only have to hand, but to own and apply, a shared statement that is communicated by the CofE at the bottom of all emails, and on websites with a **“contact us”** function included in their contents.

Quotes: Real life experiences from CofE staff

“I start my job at 9 am and smile, by 5pm I am broken”

“It is almost acceptable now and it comes with the job – e.g., profane swearing, unfounded accusations, copying people into emails far and wide. It can feel intimidating. The GDPR team lie in the firing line, are publicly ridiculed and some being named on Twitter”

“There is apparently a level of acceptability of such behaviour now”

“We have to be thick skinned. We do understand the frustrations and hurt of victims and survivors, but it did not start with us, it started with the church”

“The impact is great at times it can affect mental space. There are good provisions for counselling in house, but you are only human, and it can slow down efficiency”

Immediate Action: Requiring Improvement

What is the CofE’s response to ensuring the safety and well-being of staff?

What is the CofE policy and communication to ensuring that all those that contact its staff are to treat them politely and respectfully and not to subject them to any form of abuse? In wider society, such abuses would not be tolerated, after all.

What systems does the NST, or the wider CofE, have to assess, record, audit, and control risks to staff from behaviour that breaches acceptable standards of conduct amounting to abuse by service users and third parties?

Further, the CofE, in all areas, should work to ensure that all risks of workplace abuse are comprehensively assessed, and any identified risks are systematically managed.

“There is a long line before we would stop engaging and this can mean putting up with a lot before we get to that line” Bishop

The CofE may seek to follow the example of the NHS in adopting a Zero Tolerance approach as a good example.

This supports the government's '**Zero Tolerance**' campaign for Health Service Staff and states that GPs and other clinicians and their staff have a right to care for others without fear of being attacked or abused. To successfully provide these services, mutual respect between all the staff and patients must be in place. All staff aim to be polite, helpful, and sensitive to all patients' individual needs and circumstances. However, they also would respectfully remind patients that very often staff could be confronted with a multitude of varying and sometimes difficult tasks and situations, all at the same time. The staff understand patients do not always act in a reasonable manner due to distress and take this into consideration when trying to deal with a misunderstanding or complaint.

The practice of a Dignity at Work Policy plays an important part in preventing staff from experiencing bullying and harassment whilst at work and ensures all staff are clear about what is acceptable behaviour in their workplace. This is to ensure that all staff and those that also meet the organisation are treated with dignity, respect, and courtesy.

This is an area of policy that requires immediate exploration and staff should inform any consultation for future policy.

Recommendation 6

CofE should develop and communicate a Zero-Tolerance approach to any form of abuse, which applies to its staff as much as to its service users.

Core Groups

The purpose of the core group is to oversee and manage the response to a safeguarding concern or allegation in line with the House of Bishop's policy and practice guidelines, what is and became evident during my conversations was how central this area of policy is when managing the expectations related to victims and survivors.

Where a core group has concluded that a respondent has committed misconduct a separate decision by a person described as having a **“proper interest”** can bring an allegation of misconduct under the CDM Cases that fall into their remit are referred to the NST.

A key point to note is that risk management does not give closure to those with lived experiences and is therefore an area that can create frustrations and disappointment, raising expectations which then become a focus for disappointment that leads to a lack of faith in the CofE's processes and commitment to victims and survivors. The common theme raised related to how it can possibly manage risk without clear accountability, as recommendations made are not mandatory. This often resulted in those that had been through this process feeling let down again by a church process and especially in cases where there had been clear agreement in the supported person's favour.

Survivors' responses and perspectives have been consistent in stating how all parties apart from the victim/survivor are represented at the Core Group. This leaves survivors feeling that they are being talked about and not talked to. Meaningful feedback to survivors and their advocates/representatives has been very poor. There is an acknowledgement that safeguarding risks are prioritised, however, little consideration is given to any risk to the survivor or the impact that the process has on them.

Examples provided by both a survivor and CofE staff member:

"I did not feel part of the process or engaged, and this left me feeling more anxiety and at times suicidal"

"If, for example there was a safeguarding issue and the advice was to suspend and the bishop says no, what happens? How can we manage the ongoing risk and expectations of the survivor?" NST

"A recommendation was made, and the bishop did not agree, so how do you think this left me feeling?" Core-Group Survivor

All those taking part had a view on Core Groups from the perspective of being involved as a survivor, acting as an advocate and/or being involved in the process.

What was very clear from conversations was echoed by the following comments:

"Core Groups are unfit for purpose; it is causing more harm" Survivor engaged with a group reflecting for this report

"We can't give justice, we manage risk" NST member

"Recommendations are key but not mandatory, so how is this accountable?"

"Why are you content with it being like this, knowing that CDM let's survivors down?"

All shared the need to be more effectively involved with the voice of V/S beginning with an easy-to-read leaflet – the creation of a clear victims' charter is key here

"Often this process is the last chance saloon, due to trying other means and no one being held to account" DSA

The ISB understands there are hundreds of Core Groups at work across dioceses and it will be important to undertake an assessment of how victims and survivors experience being at the centre of discussions. Victims and survivors never attend Core Groups and there are explanations offered

for this practice, but there remains a need to ensure the voice of the person is heard, through their advocate. The advocate also does not attend the Core Group and yet is the person working closely with the person at the centre of the Core Group.

The ISB requests that this area of policy and practice is reviewed, as the advocate is significant. They are not only advocating the views of the person but equally will be reporting back to the individual with lived experience. If neither is in attendance, the views of the DSA in not being allowed to attend the Core Group should consistently be included. This is not only to inform discussions, but to gain a deeper understanding of how all concerned can be brought to understand how the Core Group outcomes may impact on the person the advocate is supporting, and what if any limitations exist to providing consistent support and information to those they advocate.

“I insist on a survivor agenda item – this is good practice, but every core group is different, need a consistent approach” DSA

“We don’t feedback to NST and need an official channel to feedback to NST” DSA

“Base it on Child Protection Conferences” DSA

“Victims feel distress, especially if they do not have an advocate “DSA

“GDPR/NFA – why are decisions made, can this be explained without breaching GDPR, it would help the survivor community” DSA

The majority of those with lived experiences candidly shared their views about the CDM process, including those that have experienced it. The view of not feeling included was echoed and the need to ensure the victim and survivor remained at the heart of the process with their advocate being involved and kept informed.

Recommendation 7

NST to devise a leaflet that is easily accessible, readable and provides information about Core Groups. This must include what a Core Group can and cannot do. The risk of not communicating this early leaves the victim or survivor less informed and can be disempowering.

Ensure all victims and survivors are informed when those alleged are to be informed of their disclosures and that they are supported appropriately by a trained safeguarding advocate.

Clergy Discipline Measure Tribunals

This report has engaged with survivors that entered a CDM process which led to a tribunal and each case was shared with great courage as they still live with the aftermath of their experiences. Furthermore, all survivors have described the CDM processes as a process that was retraumatising. This has also been reinforced by those that support and advocate on behalf of survivors, namely ISVA’s, DSA’s and those in the charity sector offering specific support to survivors.

These survivors have shared consistent experiences that describe how this process is adversarial and there is little or no thought for those victims and survivors that go through this process. The

following is a quote from an ISVA contracted by CofE who has extensive experience of working with victims and survivors, including for those that enter a criminal justice process, whereby victims and survivors are prepared for beforehand.

“It will be extremely difficult for me to recommend to any survivors of sexual abuse who approach me for support in the future, that they consider putting in a Clergy Discipline Measure complaint. It strikes me that this process is the opposite of trauma-informed, and is in fact more likely to cause re-traumatisation and quite possibly additional trauma” ISVA

We have heard allegations of breaches of confidentiality, no consideration for special measures, victims and survivors not being given the opportunity to share their account and be questioned on this, instead all shared how they had experienced a barrage of accusations and outcomes not being communicated effectively with details of judgements entering the public domain without informing the person. It is clear for all those that engaged that the process and outcome whether upheld or not, led to them being retraumatised and has impacted on their already poor mental health.

“What I could not have prepared him for as firstly, the fact that the questioning would be almost entirely a personal attack on his character, with no questioning at all about the actual assault he had alleged, and secondly, the fact that the Chair of the Panel, unlike a judge in criminal proceedings who will intervene if he or she feels a particular line of questioning is irrelevant or inappropriate, did nothing intervene” ISVA supporting a survivor

“There was no questioning at all about my client’s account of the abuse he experienced, there was just a relentless barrage of accusations about his personal character most of which had no relevance to the complaint he had made whatsoever” ISVA supporting a survivor

These conversations were some of the most difficult conversations to hear and they need to be heard across the CofE and especially by those that are engaged with tribunals. The ISB identify the following core recommendations based on hearing the experiences of survivors having been through what they describe as ***‘suffering the CDM process’***.

Recommendation 8

Devise a leaflet on the process of a tribunal this must make clear the process and the difference between a survivor putting forward their own complaint, or someone from the diocese e.g., Archdeacon or the DSA being the complainant and what the consequences are for the victim and survivor

Provide written assurance of anonymity if the survivor requests this and if this is breached the matter should be investigated – This process should be considered as a priority to protect survivors and for cases of sexual violence and abuse so that witnesses in a tribunal case can be assured of their right to anonymity prior to giving evidence

Provide Special Measures for the victim and survivor - To ensure they have the option of a screen if they are to give evidence in person, separate waiting rooms in a witness area and separate toilet facilities, ensure the victim and survivor is protected from view of the Respondent which includes

proximity – This should include training related to understanding the need for such measures and impact on witnesses for all official participants that are involved in a Panel and those advocating

Provide support with a clear timetable for the victim and survivor to be prepared for the tribunal hearing, e.g., to be shown around the hearing room or provide photographs of the room, set up of the room etc

Organise a victim and survivor consultation of those that have completed a CDM Tribunal – vital to hearing the experiences from those that have shared not having the opportunity to provide their account of abuse and/or be questioned on this. These views will be important to ensuring all victims and survivors are treated equally and fairly.

Provide a clear timeline to victims and survivors in relation to the outcome of the decision and how this will be communicated - This must be in good time and if there is a delay the reasons for this should be communicated.

Keynote:

Do not publicly publish the judgment without informing the victim and survivor first – This is due to survivors sharing how they were not informed of the decision/judgement, and saw it on the Church of England website and for some published in Church Times or in the press

CDM Review Consultation March 2022

The ISB welcomes the CDM review, also welcomed across the CofE, especially by victims, survivors and those working to support both. This is an area identified by all as a priority, as the concern remains that in its pre-review form it is harming those who access it. The need to ensure a timely framework for the implementation of reforms, and to communicate this widely, will be significant in building on the trust and confidence of all, especially victims and survivors.

This consultation led to broader discussions and understanding of how those developing this area of policy noted the importance of leading such a significant policy, and the equal need to consult with survivors. However, they also shared how it had been difficult and challenging to know and identify who can speak generically for the diverse group of people who are survivors.

“I have had various discussions with various people about how we can best do that, all of which has proved, from my perspective, to be quite frustrating”

“I am very conscious that we will leave out individuals and perhaps other groups who will no doubt say “I/we should have been consulted”. I am afraid that I will just have to take the flack for that in the end” A Policy contributor

This consultation paper was accompanied by a flow chart being sent to the existing survivor groups, namely MACSAS, SRG and Survivor Voices. The paper consisted of nine specific questions with an opportunity to comment on the broad outline of proposals that will further inform the overall policy. This left survivors with just one week to engage and distribute to others, a very brief time given this has been such a significant consultation.

The ISB have heard the experiences of numerous survivors who share how this approach negatively impacted on their confidence and heightened their concerns about future effective engagement with survivors, who are left questioning the real commitment of the CofE in such an important policy area. The above comments were also shared with some of the survivors in an email, which has given the impression that engagement with survivors is not being well thought out. Some survivors shared that this approach also questions the value of such significant consultations and spoke of how this approach feels “**tokenistic.**”

Survivors have questioned this approach during the work undertaken towards this report and spoke of how a piece of work as important as this needed to have a proper and resourced consultation led by those leading on engagement with survivors. The NST lead on victim and survivor engagement were clear there is a need to have a lead Director and lead member of staff for such engagement, and sufficient time to undertake the work concerned.

Recommendation 9

Establish an immediate plan for consultation with survivors, this should be prioritised and developed in conjunction with survivors.

Further Exploration Is Required

How does the NST engage with those leading on such significant consultations, to inform the process that seeks to hear the views of those past and present engaging with the CDM process?

What is the planned approach that assures NST that victims, survivors, and those who support them through the CDM process are sharing their views so to contribute to significant changes in policy areas?

How are the challenges and frustrations of those wishing to engage with broader diverse survivors being heard, informing survivor strategy, and overcome?

What was clear was how the current process of the CDM can be harmful to those at the centre and frustrating for those seeking to implement it, whilst doing their best to support victims and survivors. It became clear that many are aware of this position, however, there is now a need to ensure that a reformed CDM is considered a priority for development, with timely and achievable timescales. This is not only in the interest of those at the heart of this process today, but also to support those who implement it who are the position of managing the expectations of victims, survivors, and respondents alike.

The ISB is uncertain of the timescale for the conclusion of the CDM review and policy implementation, an uncertainty shared by, and which remains problematic for, victims and survivors. This policy and subsequent process form an area that will continue to impact on the ability of the CofE to build a trusting and meaningful relationship with those hurt by the church. There is a risk that failure to prioritise it could further impact those with lived experience trusting in the CofE ownership and commitment to working towards a safer church. The ISB acknowledges that this process is a cause of harm for some who go through it. This knowledge is clear and “**out there,**” and

acting accordingly with the right leadership, treated as a priority, is what those with lived experiences are now seeking.

Responding Well to Victims and Survivors

There is clear policy guidance on responding well to victims and survivors. However, this does not consider what is in some areas the challenges faced by dioceses. For example, the message is clear that not all dioceses are equal in terms of available safeguarding resources, or the importance placed on safeguarding from the top in each diocese's hierarchy. The impact of this equates to those with lived experiences of church abuse or reporting abuse receiving markedly different responses. The ISB has identified how this creates unease and frustration often both for those in need and those advocating or trying to provide support. There remains a need to address this at a national level.

“The way to get someone to take us seriously is to get cross with them”. Survivor who was not able to access a high level of support at her Diocese

“I had to make a nuisance of myself, don't want to do this and it is tiring but it is better than being ignored, because of a lack of resource” Survivor

“The frustrating thing is that if my survivor was a few miles down the road, she would get the right level of support as that diocese can afford it, but I can only give her the bare minimum” DSA

Person Centred Approaches (PCA)

I have personally engaged with past Good Practice Events that have provided clear recommendations when engaging with survivors, many of which have been consistent with this report. However, I wish to highlight one area that has been identified in the past and this relates to the need for PCA. This also needs to acknowledge how there is no time limit to reporting abuse that happened in the past. For all those who do, it requires immense courage as they are expected to recall horrific memories. A perspective shared with us for this report was on how if the abuse happened a long time ago, it might be difficult for the NST and/or police to gather evidence. However, the ISB believes that in all circumstances there remains the need to provide an empathic and compassionate response.

This reinforces the need for past report recommendations to be prioritised to achieve a position whereby all those engaging with victims or survivors and especially at the point of first disclosing, have a consistent PCA which should include the use of language and terms that acknowledge a historical experience as the victim or survivor experiences it, and that it should be acknowledged as if it were happening in the present.

The ISB acknowledges significant reports such as SCIE - Final Overview Report of the independent diocesan safeguarding audits and additional work on improving responses to survivors of abuse (2019). The ISB believe that much progress has been made related to this report's recommendations. However, this report remains relevant, and some from the survivor community are still repeating some of the issues related to this report. Therefore, there is a need to look back

at reports, considering this report to identify relevant repeated consistent themes for victims, survivors and those responding.

Recommendation 10

CofE to adopt a PCA across the CofE and prioritised within the NST:

The ISB regards a PCA as having many benefits for victims and survivors and to improving professional responses, be it in relation to support in practice, or in policy development. All shared with us how this would improve the following:

All will feel more motivated when engaging with a plan they have input into, that is tailored to specific needs.

- It helps them work towards their goals and reach important milestones.
- This approach will work towards supporting emotional, personal, and social needs.
- It encourages independence which can be empowering and give the survivor more responsibility, which can be another motivating factor.
- It will increase confidence and trust with an aim to feel more positive about the service they are receiving, which creates a much better environment for both the individual and professional and the role of the church.
- The quality of care is improved which may aid recovery and healing.

Benefits for those engaging with victims and survivors:

- A more positive and happier environment is created when the treatment is focused on the personal needs of victims and survivors.
- Victims and survivors are likelier to be more invested, less mistrusting when their needs are being addressed.
- It can improve the individual's path towards healing and increased emotional well-being if they are involved in decision making of their recovery process, which is hugely beneficial for those exiting the Interim Support Scheme as they return to rebuilding their lives without such support.
- All these benefits create more cost and time efficient services as care quality is improved and those in need of support are more co-operative.
- Enable professionals to manage expectations with mutual respect and regard.

Further Exploration

Should the CofE consider: A Victims' Charter and/or A Code of Practice specifically for the care of victim and survivors?

If the CofE considers a Victims' Charter and/or Code of Practice desirable, it should have regard for all areas of interface with survivors. At the heart of this policy should be consideration for clear

communication and consistent and agreed responses, notwithstanding every response will be different and tailored to the persons concerned. There can be agreement on areas that are key for victims and survivors.

The ISB believes a Victims' Code could provide the opportunity to focus on victims' rights and enable the CofE to set out the minimum standard the organisation must provide to victims and survivors of church abuse or those that seek support from the church.

A Victims' Charter would set out expectations of how they should be treated and what advice, support, and practical information they can expect to receive, thereby managing realistic expectations.

If there is consideration given to developing a code or charter this should be in consultation with victims, survivors and those supporting them across the church community. The conversations of the past four months have highlighted the significant need for a uniform and consistent approach to engaging with victims and survivors. This should be rooted in what can be expected when victims and survivors access the CofE. The ISB believes this approach will be enabling to the CofE to continue building on the relationship of trust and confidence with the survivor community.

Those responding to allegations of Abuse/Misconduct

The ISB also recognises the importance of including and listening to those alleged to be guilty of abuse and/or misconduct to understand how they are also supported. The following captures some of the experiences of those that support those alleged to be guilty of abuse and/or misconduct.

***“Everything takes so long, and it takes its toll on the person and there have been suicides”
Supporter***

“We can offer support from a Link Person, but this is not therapy, and they can only deal with one or the other, alleged or a victim”

“Most people dealing with those alleged find they are not supported and yet they are innocent until proven guilty”

“There is a need for people to understand the depths of distress for both alleged and victim”

“It is important to see and hear the person behind the allegation”

There are differing degrees of allegations and those that took part in conversations were alleged to have not provided leadership and acting as expected with non-recent events.

Case Example:

Mr Y served the church throughout his lifetime and now feels that he has been turned into an abuser. The incident was in relation to not dealing, as a trustee, with a volunteer who had a record of abuse. This led to Mr Y being questioned about the incident and his feelings of being singled out as a trustee. Mr Y was told to withdraw from all roles and felt that he was left out in the cold as there was no pastoral support. Mr Y finally received an apology as it was acknowledged that what

had happened was not his fault, but for him the damage had been done. He felt that he was being held responsible for past shortcomings and he was made to feel like a criminal.

Impact:

Mr Y vividly described the pain caused to him and his family and how he was shocked to read of this incident in a Review which made him feel like he was an abuser. The impact was clearly still visible from our conversation. Mr Y states that he has no closure and the whole experience was one that made him feel he was guilty until he could be proven to be innocent rather than the other way round.

What would have helped?

He describes how he had no idea about the role of the NST and would not even have known they existed were it not for this incident. The need to be clear about the role of NST and for them to communicate their role across the diocese.

A formal process that clearly explained what happens next is essential, as being in the dark causes' greater anxiety. Mr Y was clearly communicating at all levels, including to Bishops with safeguarding leads.

“I felt a blank wall of powerful people”

“The Dioceses are run by an individual – a single man – a Bishop”

An understanding of where Mr Y could complain that went above those, he was seeking help from, an appeal process or a body such as the ISB that can speak independently but equally act.

Questions

How are those about whom allegations are made supported and kept informed of the process?

How does the NST communicate reports that involve individuals who have been alleged of abuse and/or misconduct?

Turning Themes into Action

The importance of an adequate safe and person-centred first response when disclosing must be reinforced, as it remains key, and was deemed a critical factor to building a relationship of trust and confidence. Those with lived experience usually report their concerns after much reflection, and the courage this takes should never be lost in communication. An important consideration applying to the needs of victims and survivors is the fact that needs may change over time. It should also be noted that other needs may arise not only during but after a process has been completed, which also raised the question for the ISB of how, and when, support ends.

Treating those with lived experiences with compassion and respect for their dignity, is a fundamental aspect of providing victims and survivors with justice. For all those who took part it was

important for them to be believed, and that their suffering as the result of a wrongful act against them was acknowledged.

There was clearly a lack of consistency in responses, including to those alleged of being guilty of abuse, which led to those engaging with some church structures to become further distressed and frustrated, leading to a greater mistrust that often resulted in numerous Subject Access Requests. There were clear points in communication when things deteriorated for victims and survivors and this was often linked to both a lack of timely responses and receiving responses that provided little or no information, or responses that lacked compassion.

Those working with victims and survivors accept that all should be treated with dignity and respect in all interactions be it with church leaders, DSAs, ISVA, the NST or the ISB. However, what is clear from our conversations is how some processes, procedures and communications lack consistency and often sensitivity. The ISB considers that there remains a need to ensure a consistent victim and survivor sensitive response for all those interacting with those with lived experiences, and this should include how those that work in CoFE communicate believing victims.

Being believed

My conversations shone a bright light on how on average it took victims 4 to 5 contacts with differing people before they felt believed, imagine how this would feel if they were believed first time.

“It’s dreadful, lawyers discourage this, and it inhibits conversations, and it should not be a fear in the initial conversation” DSA

The ISB has heard that the need to be believed remains loud and clear and a cause of great distress, as many relayed repeatedly sharing this need to others. Their distress was increased by some responses to them as victims and survivors, as some of those tasked with responding clearly stated they were not able to respond in this way.

Examples:

“All I want to be is believed, why is it so difficult to say, ‘I believe you’. Survivor.

“We can’t say we believe you, instead we will say, I have no reason to disbelieve you’. NST Staff/DSA

“If someone disclosed to someone senior and they asked us to say we believe them, they will expect us to act, and we also have a responsibility for clergy. I will not say I believe you, but I will absolutely make it clear that I will take the allegation seriously and act accordingly”. Bishop

“I have no issue with saying I believe what you are sharing, and I would always listen and share that I am sorry we are having this conversation. It sometimes feels that case workers need permission to say they believe the person and the fear of litigation makes us cautious.” DSA

“If I was to say that it could be tricky, and people become guarded”. DSA

“I always will acknowledge the need to be believed and have no problem saying I believe you” ISVA

The need to feel believed is vital for victims and survivors when engaging and these responses demonstrate approaches that lack consistency as some will say they believe, while some do not. This serves to frustrate and distress victims and survivors who require consistent responses. The ISB believes this is an area that requires further exploration, to work towards a uniformed approach as this remains significant to victims and survivors.

Moving Forward: Shared Thoughts:

“It would help if they said, I am sorry for how you’ve said you have been treated by the church” Survivor

“I keep asking you to believe me and then I feel avoidance, this causes delays and then it gets toxic, why not just acknowledge what happened without telling me you believe me”

“I take every allegation seriously and will do so with yours”

Recommendation 11

The CofE should develop key shared consistent messages to communicate across the CofE workforce

The CofE should develop agreed consistent, empathic responses for victims and survivors where you are not able to say you believe them, which include being believed this response needs to understand each individual situation and provide a supportive explanation

Trauma Informed Approaches

The consistent retelling of experiences was a consistent theme and one which caused ever more anxiety for the person reporting or engaged in a process. There is a need to be protected from secondary victimisation, the harm that can be caused by those who respond to or seek to hear again the stories of victims and survivors, including in the pursuit of redress. There remains a need to ensure a process whereby victims and survivors are not having to repeatedly tell their stories, something which leads to increased mental distress and should be prevented.

These contexts present the risk that victims and survivors may be retraumatised by the attitudes or modes of questioning used when engaging with those working in safeguarding, who may simply be applying policies and processes. Redressing the risks of secondary victimisation requires an understanding of the needs of victims and survivors, and the impact of church abuse. The ISB believe

such protection is essential to healing and building relationships of trust and confidence with the church and those offering support.

Trauma awareness training has been co-produced with survivors with the aim to encourage trauma informed practice, however, this is not mandatory training. Furthermore, the ISB is unclear how this training is monitored to evaluate if it is embedded into practice to monitor positive and safer outcomes for victims and survivors.

Questions for exploration:

What does a Trauma Informed Diocese look like?

Should Trauma Informed Training be mandatory?

Recommendation 12

The CofE should establish a Quality Assurance Framework to monitor trauma informed responses to victims and survivors.

The National Safeguarding Team (NST)

The NST has a significant role in relation to policy development that all, including victim and survivors, understand and agree to be a significant and often a positive role. However, when engaging with victims and survivors, they all shared the view that NST responses were often bureaucratic and not person-centred or always built on the principles expected of a church body. Many stated that responses lacked compassion.

There is clearly an interface between the NST, victims and survivors, which goes beyond policy development. Many, including those yet to report their abuse, will look to the NST when searching for initial support and guidance, as the NST is the national safeguarding team employed by the CofE.

A shared view from the survivor community was that this engagement can lead to some victims and survivors becoming increasingly frustrated, one example provided was the lack of a timely response.

Many who engaged with this ISB report stated that when initial and on-going engagement started there was a lack of consistent responses. This can result in victims and survivors sending frequent emails due to, and seeking to resolve, these inconsistencies. This can include copying several people with lead responsibilities nationally in safeguarding work. This can now include ISB members.

Shared DSA/Survivor Views About NST

“You can often tell the professional background of NST staff, and many are police officers, but do they have experience of dealing with survivors?” DSA

“Diocese cannot deliver the expectations of the NST, need for an effective, mutual working relationship with NST beyond DSA days”. DSA

Example to reinforce the above point:

“We get a Responding Well Policy document and are told now implement it”. DSA

“National priorities need to be visible to us and all, including survivors” DSA/Survivor”

Shared NST staff views on the same issues:

“It is not our job to make findings of fact”. NST

“When policies don’t land, we are the ones that have to manage the fallout.’ NST

“Caseworkers can feel like they need permission to say this or that”. NST

***“There is still a need for the role of NST to be clearly communicated and this includes for public”.
DSA/Link Person***

“We are not investigators”. NST

“They are good at policy development but need to consult with all before they send out the policies”. DS

“NST behaves a like a LA (bureaucratic) not a church”. Survivor

“I thought they were representatives of the church, so like the head of safeguarding so it was obvious to go there first to report” Numerous survivors

“Prescriptive with little engagement on a local level”. DSA

“Majority of our work relates to how Bishops and Deans have handled past situations” NST

“There needs to be someone or a team responding to victims and survivors in the NST, it is not consistent” Survivor

“NST receive information from the duty systems and hold them and survivors think we are in a stronger position, we are not” Caseworker

“We need a standard email at initial disclosure that gives victims and survivors confidence, this lack of consistency does not help, who’s holding the responsibility, the hot potato?” Caseworker

The NST clearly has a role of engaging with victims, survivors, and members of the public as the representative body in safeguarding for the CofE. This includes shaping, informing, developing policy and practice and training materials, and a core listening role as it is highly likely that victims, survivors and third parties will contact the NST. It is therefore important to focus on this role as responses to victims and survivors vary. Therefore, there is a need for a timely, coordinated, and consistent approach for all that make initial enquires accessing the NST.

Further Exploration/Observations

Those working with survivors share how some express an interest in engaging with the CofE in relation to its safeguarding vision as this can also be part of their healing process. However,

DSAs/ISVAs stated that requiring a pathway for referral into the NST should be clearly laid out for those wishing to engage. The ISB acknowledges that survivors are a resource and experts in experience. The courage, wisdom, and insight of many should act as a guide and inspiration across the CofE.

Recommendation 13

The CofE should establish a clear referral pathway for those working with survivors to refer into the NST. This should be communicated across dioceses and on all relevant websites to encourage survivor engagement

Many of those who support victim and survivors shared how the perception is that the majority of the NST's staff come from a background of policing and queried if recruitment should be broader to include more staff with backgrounds in social care, voluntary sector and services that directly provide support to victims.

The shared view from those with lived experiences was how in their experience, NST responses often lacked humanity and compassion and that there was a greater need for a trauma informed response. It is not the case that trauma informed training is mandatory and that if all did take part in it, there remains a need to embed it in practice.

There remains a need for consistent feedback and evaluation from victims and survivors related to services provided by the church to identify gaps and to ensure compassionate responses. Such feedback will inform not only survivor engagement but also responses from the NST to the survivor community.

In some instances, the victims and survivors we engaged with shared the view that there was a lack of consistency and compassion when dealing with the NST.

The need to ensure the website is clear and accessible related to the role of the NST was important to all.

Further Exploration/Observations

Does the NST monitor the number (or use other forms of monitoring) of victims, survivors, and public contacting them and what these queries relate to?

Who deals with the initial queries?

Is there or should there be a dedicated number advertised for victims, survivors and/or third parties?

Does the NST currently collate or invite feedback from victims and survivors on service responses after engagement?

Further Exploration/Observation

Should there be a team within the NST that is more accessible and immediately relatable for victims and survivors that will respond to initial enquires and ensure the provision of consistent support?

Recommendation 14

The CofE should identify and publicise a clear pathway for victims and survivors to contact the NST, this should include a team that is able to provide empathic listening due to possible disclosures.

The CofE should identify a process to collate feedback from victims and survivors who engage with NST, this should inform further improvements for the NST itself, and for those engaging with NST.

Lambeth Palace

My conversations reveal how many victims and survivors perceive Lambeth Palace to be the CofE Headquarters, a belief that results in them directing a high volume of communication to Lambeth.

This belief has been reinforced by conversations with Lambeth Palace staff members who are often in the position of managing victim and survivor expectations. Most of these expectations are related to wanting to receive apologies, and the Redress Scheme.

My observations highlight how Lambeth Palace receives numerous requests for apologies especially from the Archbishop of Canterbury, with high expectations. However, it is not possible to meet all such expectations and there is inevitably an impact of this.

Recommendation 15

Lambeth Palace should ensure it effectively communicates its role to dispel the myth of its being CofE headquarters. This could prevent so many victims and survivors having to retell their experiences, as Lambeth Palace and its staff are not always the appropriate body.

Lambeth Palace should consider a plan to manage the expectations of both victims and survivors.

The role of the Archbishop of Canterbury should be more effectively and consistently communicated in relation to apologies.

There is clearly an expectation from victims and survivors for the Archbishop of Canterbury to provide numerous individual apologies. If this is not appropriate, it would be helpful to understand and communicate why, otherwise some within the survivor community will perceive it to be a lack of care for victims and survivors from someone in a position of leadership, when this is far from the case.

Designated Survivor Advocate (DSA) Independent Sexual Abuse Advisor (ISVA)

The role of the DSA/ISVA was regarded as vital as it was central to supporting and advocating on behalf of those that made disclosures. There are many good examples of their work making a significant difference in the lives of victims and survivors. It is often the case that many victims and survivors come forward in crisis as stated earlier. This does not diminish if the reporting is of non-recent abuse. Crisis needs to be responded to effectively and with the resources to provide a range of support services. It is evident that some DSA cannot manage the capacity expected of them for those in crisis as some are overstretched and this has resource implications.

The DSA will often be the person responding to people in crisis, identifying counselling support for those in need. Some have shared the challenges, not only the resource implications for financial provisions, but also the impact of structural challenges. These requests for funding (for some) are often via a committee structure or can be dependent on when the next meeting of Bishop's staff is scheduled.

“The lead officer being the DSA must be able to access funding based on their assessment of need and urgency in their own authority.” DSA

If DSAs are not given this responsibility, the person in immediate need and at crisis point will also live through a time delay. The implications will be that it will cause further distress and further frustrate the advocate who is left explaining this.

All those working within the church have shared how responding to victims and survivors of church-based abuse can be extremely challenging as it is complex and can place huge pressure on church employees and office holders. The importance of identifying such challenges as highlighted and seeking to immediately rectify them will create greater confidence amongst both staff and for those in need.

The ISB recognises it is identifying varying challenges for DSA/ISVAs that will ultimately have an impact on outcomes for victims and survivors. The following is a real example encountered during the writing of this report, of what the DSA refers to as a feeling despair.

The following is a description shared by the DSA, paraphrased:

If we continue to support survivors to have ongoing psychotherapy, we will simply not be able to afford to employ the ISVA role within the budget, let alone achieve the bigger picture of need, being two more ISVA's from different charities across the counties for at least three days a week. Our Diocese is completely committed to survivor support, but we still must scabble around with our 'small budget' in comparison to the Support Scheme budget.

This comes in the week where I have spoken to three survivors specifically about PCR2 publication and one of whom needs extra support from their on-going therapy as a direct result of what the publication has bought up for them.

We have directly sought the support of the only national support scheme in the Church, this being the ISS, however, they are not willing to direct funds towards the need that is calling out.

“Wait until Redress and it might be able to help, is simply not good enough”

The Responding Well guidance policy states dioceses need to provide for therapy locally for short and medium term needs but it does not consider longer term needs. This remains a considerable gap and one in which dioceses such as in this example are supporting longer term needs at a considerably high cost. The ISB is concerned about how these issues could impact on those in need of support, especially if this is limited or there is no budget to assist the person in need.

Immediate Exploration Is Required

This challenge has been much-repeated. The fact remains that there is a need to ensure the emotional support needs of victims and survivors are as well served as possible, ways should be found so that this can be achieved without the need to remove vital support roles or prevent the development of future support roles, as the quoted example highlights possibly having to happen as a last resort. Inevitably therefore, the question of adequate resources rather than “doing more with less” lies at the centre of the challenge, as does creating and rigorously applying both clarity and consistency regarding what can and what does not qualify for support, especially in the long term.

Recommendation 16

Extend the ISS to support dioceses not able to fund support victims and survivors of church abuse in need of longer-term support.

The ISS does not have a budget but an understanding that those in leadership are prepared to offer support deemed necessary based on all concerned following a process. Therefore, the extended longer term emotional support advocated by those supporting survivors must be an issue for ongoing consideration. The consequences of not considering this longer-term support and laying out clear conditions for qualification could prove distressing for both those in crisis, and those responding to them. The ISB is equally conscious that there is a delicate balance to be achieved in not creating dependency in those being helped, and in ensuring sound use of charitable resources such as those at the command of the CofE. The complexity in this area is undeniable and should be consciously addressed as part of future developments.

Consistent Themes

Where are roles advertised to attract those with experience of working with victims and survivors?

Staff working across several teams and services who have shared their experiences of responding to victims and survivors demonstrably seek to offer a compassionate response whilst being conscious that they are also working for a larger organisation, the CofE, in whose settings the abuse happened. This creates a different dynamic from that in any other organisation such as a Local Authority, health setting or Police Force whose staff are also dealing with safeguarding work. Therefore, it is incumbent on the CofE to provide additional training and support and to ensure that responses to challenges made to its ways of thinking of working by DSAs/ISVAs are dealt with both objectively, and as a priority.

This development role should also extend, as in many places it does, to DSAs going out to parishes to raise awareness. The following example demonstrates how this role is important to reaching potential victim and survivors of recent abuse.

Example:

Roadshows in some dioceses that have raised awareness of domestic abuse and coercive and controlling behaviours, both of which carry safeguarding risks and realities, have led to increased disclosures (30-40 people attended one event, for example). The awareness raising and support role is important to ensuring the CofE is consciously connecting with victims and survivors of abuse who seek support from their church community.

DSAs identify the NST as being a source of support as well as challenge, but there remains a need to spread the word about and be clear on the roles of the NST. This awareness raising on the national body should be widely, and given people move around probably repeatedly, communicated across the CofE.

All who participated in the work for this report agreed that the role of DSAs/ISVAs is vital and should be supported and extended across dioceses in a consistent way. There is a need to ensure what support they can provide is advertised across services and organisations that support victims and survivors, within and beyond the CofE, was also consistently reported. Participants emphasised that it is equally important to ensure the right people are recruited.

“Victims and survivors have high expectations of us and NST has grown but dioceses have not and neither have DSA roles”. DSA

“Every encounter could be a therapeutic encounter”. DSA

“It is time to ensure that every Diocese works with ISVAs and this needs to be encouraged”. ISVA/DSA

“Survivors do wish to engage with NST, but I don’t trust the NST, as they may let the survivor down, we need a clear pathway into NST for survivors that wish to engage”. DSA

“The role of DSA/ISVA can be viewed as a balancing act at times, as the roles (as with others) can be viewed as being on the side of the CofE”.

“NST host a DSA networking day which is good but not deemed enough”. DSA

“We are expected to identify funding for therapy short and medium term and then when it runs out what do we do?” Both DSA/ISVA

Survivor Groups/Support

The Survivor Reference Group (SRG) is an established group that represents those that have suffered abuse in the CofE. The ISB was provided with the SRG Terms of Reference as part of my work towards this report. These remain in draft and are under negotiation with the NST and the safeguarding lead Bishop. Alongside the draft TOR sits a proposed memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the SRG and the AC, which also remains under review. The MoU seeks to provide some definition to the relationship between the SRG and the AC, including any support to be provided to the work of the SRG by the Church.

The NST has a longer term stated aim to develop a more comprehensive survivor engagement framework to be used to increase ways in which survivors may engage directly and individually in supported fashion with bodies across the church. The NST also acknowledges, and has due regard for, some survivors wishing to remain part of a group such as the SRG.

Observation: The Survivor Reference Group (SRG)

The SRG continues to not have clarity regarding the support being offered by the NST or the rest of the CofE to the SRG as a body, and to its work. The TOR have been through several versions, in communication and working with the NST, but remain in draft, which some participants expressed as a cause of ongoing frustration. The need to clarify both the relationship and the support to be given to the SRG, now requires resolution. This is a further area where there is a need to manage survivor expectations and ensure consistent and effective communication to assure the survivor community.

“There are no funded survivor reference groups, although there is some co-production”.

“There have been past agreements and promises of budgets, but nothing happens?”

“There have been surveys with victims and survivors, but little is known as to how they inform policy/practice and change. It may be the case that we have informed things, but it must be communicated”.

Recommendation 17

The CofE should create and then carefully curate and keep up to date a central list of registered therapeutic supporters. Its contents should extend to identifying those with experience of supporting victims and survivors of spiritual abuse, and other forms of abuse found predominantly in faith settings, including the CofE.

The raising of questions related to appropriate and qualified therapeutic support was consistent across those who spoke to the ISB for this report. Practice in this field varies considerably across dioceses, an issue raised equally consistently. NST staff shared how some dioceses may outsource support to NGOs, whilst others may directly recruit and then deploy and manage their own support personnel. The ISB notes and commends the fact that whichever route is undertaken, all support personnel are required to undertake NST training, though questions remain regarding why DSAs have no input into this.

Further Exploration to inform our recommendation

Who should lead on identifying a list of suitably qualified therapist and support workers? Such a list should be verified by the appropriate bodies to be assured of safeguards for those being referred

Does the training for support workers include PCA and the coverage of the CofE’s now-agreed category of spiritual abuse?

What is the job description for Support Workers and is it consistent across dioceses? Does it include an essential requirement of understanding spiritual abuse, given the CofE has now adopted a definition, and research indicates it can be a prelude to, or accompany, other forms of abuse?

The Newcastle Project: If I told you, what would you do?

The ISB members attended May 2022’s DSA development day, and all attended the survivor engagement workshop offered as part of it. This was an opportunity for the ISB, DSAs and NST

members alike to meet survivors and to hear about the pioneering work of the Newcastle diocese's project which has been underpinned by and relies on the expression of survivor experiences.

Survivors shared their experiences, and the comments below reflect some of what was voiced in this powerful workshop:

“We have a right to be righteously angry, the church has caused a moral injury, it is alright being sorry, but there is a need to know how to be sorry”.

“We came to the church for solace and then were abused”. Survivor

“What does doing better look like and how to heal the church?” Reflective question.

‘If I Told You, What Would You Do?’ is the name of this strategy. It has been jointly funded by Safe Spaces and the Diocese of Newcastle and aimed from the outset to engage with survivors of faith-based abuse, as well as with those who need to see, hear, and respond well to them.

The purpose of the materials produced is to promote the physical, psychological, and spiritual wellbeing of those who have experienced trauma and abuse in the church. This is achieved by providing peer support to victims and survivors, and by helping to build up the church's communal resources of compassion and confidence in responding well to those who disclose abuse, no matter how long ago it happened. This diocese has used its initiative by engaging in this work as part of the implementation of the CofE guidance on how to respond well to victims and survivors of all kinds of abuse.

The term **‘Post Traumatic Growth’** was shared as those with experiences of church abuse used this term as one that defined their on-going journey towards healing. This also included their engagement with the CofE which courageously involved the sharing of their experiences to educate and so raise awareness.

This was clearly demonstrated as the work of **‘If I Told You, What Would You Do’** has been informed by collating the experiences and so the voices and specifically the words of survivors to develop narratives to inform their work and produce compassionate resources. The ISB identifies this as a model of good practice and one that reinforces the importance of survivor engagement to reach those yet to disclose, those that have disclosed, and to further strengthen CofE vision for safeguarding. The ISB acknowledges the significant engagement of those who were hurt by the church that wish to become involved in the vision of safeguarding within the church, as courageous and a selfless act. This engagement should be acknowledged, encouraged, and supported across the dioceses.

Recommendation 18

NST, dioceses and others should familiarise themselves with, use and distribute the range of resources available including **“If I told you what would you do?”** and the approaches linked to it. That work should include the materials links and approaches being visible on websites. This development will also support the work towards CofE bodies being ever more survivor focused and providing compassionate responses.

The resources concerned are intended for:

- Those with lived experience of abuse in a church context, those who have spoken out and those who have not yet found a voice.
- The families and friends of those who have experienced church-based abuse and are living with the consequences.
- Clergy and lay members of church bodies who need to see, hear, and respond well to those who have experienced trauma and abuse in the church.
- Colleagues in non-church professions who work with survivors of church-based abuse (e.g., Mental health services) and need to understand the impacts of this abuse and how to respond well.

Role of the Authorised Listener: Known as Link Person

The Link Person directly works with the victim, survivors and those responding having been accused of abuse. The Diocese makes referrals to the Link Person and provides a phone number for the person, but no information about what the person has experienced

The Link Person then deals with any one of a range of numerous issues. Examples shared with the ISB for this report included a range as wide as domestic abuse, coercive control, being refused a licence, and bullying. It can be that some of those approaching the CofE for this support do not wish to meet and require prayer or other forms of support.

The Link Person role is clearly significant in providing support for those who have suffered harm, are still being harmed, or who have been alleged to be guilty of abuse and/or misconduct. The ISB recognises this to be a significant role and areas for improvements were shared by the first responders/Link Persons who took part, as detailed below.

Please note these shared experiences reflect a small sample. The ISB acknowledges that practice may have improved, but the need for assurances that this is the case remains given those who shared their reflections were consistent in their accounts.

Immediate areas for Improvement

“We should be provided with background narrative of those being referred, even an outline would be helpful.”

“There is no supervision, the diocesan safeguarding team are available, but the Link Person would have to use their initiative. We would benefit from monthly supervision.”

“Very little emotional support is offered for those responding having been alleged to have committed abuse or bullying offences. We do hear about suicide ideation.”

“There is no formal process for reporting the meeting outcomes after the meeting.”

“Little and sometimes no acknowledgment from the safeguarding team.”

“It would be helpful to have a process that includes dos and don’ts”

“NST invite us for training, but this does not consider the fact that we may be going into people’s homes.”

“I was not aware of any support, or of Safe Spaces.”

“Link people do not meet others and it would be helpful for them to come together to share experiences and to be further informed.”

“It would be helpful to receive NST and other newsletters.”

Recommendation 19

The NST should seek assurances from dioceses that all those referred to a Link Person receive full background information related to the person being referred

The Safe Spaces project should be more widely and determinedly communicated across all the dioceses, and that awareness raising should include Link Persons

Survivor Chaplaincy/Pastoral Support

I met and listened to those developing project ideas in areas related to supporting the pastoral and spiritual needs of survivors of abuse. This included hearing some of the views of the survivor community. Those working with survivors such as DSAs have identified a need for pastoral support. This is echoed in conversations with some survivors. The need is greater for those with an ongoing faith. At the time of writing, this need was not being fully met but was actively being considered.

Those developing this area of policy and practice provided several case studies that highlight the challenges faced by those supporting survivors and made further recommendations to build on the developing strengths seen in this area of work. This includes reinforcing this report’s call for person-centred approaches, and developing a theologically based and pastorally focused voice, amongst other potential developments. The Chaplaincy for Survivors Workshop Programme has also been developed in conjunction with survivors, who are involved in the delivery of the programme.

Further Exploration and Support

The church continues to seek ways to express compassion, care, and support to survivors of abuse, whilst facing the reality that for many survivors, despite the investment of safeguarding, many survivors particularly of clerical abuse are sharing how the church has made things worse.

One of the duties of Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse states the duty to offer pastoral and spiritual care to survivors (RWCSA: Section 6). There is therefore a real opportunity to build on the work to date that in the view of the ISB has been informed by those hurt by the church. We hope the contents of this report will add strength and momentum to this already developing work.

The conversations discussed in this report highlight both how some survivors have now turned away from their faith, and how some are managing their continuing but changed faith in their own way,

often with little support. This was reinforced by the IICSA, which highlighted in its reports on faith groups and the CofE the large numbers of people losing their faith after being harmed by the Church in which they had often been both involved and personally invested for a long period. The project working on Survivor Chaplaincy provision provides a further opportunity to support those struggling with maintaining or developing their faith, as well as for those who continue to look to their faith as part of their healing process.

Recommendation 20

The CofE should support the ongoing progress related to Survivor Chaplaincy and Pastoral Support, seeing these developments as a priority in developing its approach to safeguarding

Safe Spaces

The Safe Spaces service is an ecumenical project founded in partnership with the Catholic Church in England and Wales. The two churches formed a new company 'Safe Spaces England and Wales's (SSEW) which is now also confirmed as a charity. It is responsible for commissioning the Safe Spaces service, which is currently being delivered by the charity Victim Support.

Safe Spaces is a free and independent support service, providing a confidential and personal, safe space for anyone who has been abused by someone in the Church or because of their relationship with the Church of England, the Catholic Church in England and Wales or the Church in Wales. The service is provided nationally through the Safe Spaces helpline and Live Chat for as long as service users feel they need it.

The one-year evaluation report on the pilot phase contains several recommendations, including those relating to the need to heighten publicity and raise awareness of the service, survivor engagement, accessibility, and data collection. This report will inform the future for the service after the two-year pilot phase ends, including helping to shape the future service specification and funding arrangements. A final report will also be produced at the end of the pilot which will be published and made publicly available as part of SSEW's commitment to transparency and contributing to ongoing learning in this area.

All those taking part in conversations were asked specific questions related to Safe Spaces, as follows:

Do you know about Safe Spaces?

If yes, what has been your experience of Safe Spaces?

Future of Safe Spaces, what should it look like?

Responses are as follows:

"It is a good concept and I have called them, but they sound like a sales pitch" Survivor of church abuse.

“Call handlers receive one day of training with little and for some no training on church abuse”.
Survivor

“Never heard of them” Lawyer for victims and survivors.

“Safe Spaces own report demonstrates 100% satisfaction rates from those using the service, this is based on 4 responses”. Survivor Panel Member

“Survivors have clearly shared their concerns, complained and they have repeated them, but it falls on deaf ears.” Survivor of church abuse

“They need to be clear in what they offer, what it is and what it is not, they are not advocates.”
Majority voice of survivors

“The website is not survivor friendly and does not speak to church abuse.”

“Did not know about them, but I can see now that I need to know.” Member of a Diocesan team/Link Person

“Survivors tell me that support needs to be pastoral and spiritual, and it clearly is not what we thought it would be and I will not be referring in now.” DSA

“Are they trained specifically in how to support those of church abuse, as I have not felt it to be trauma informed.” Survivor accessing support

“It has a negative reputation.” DSA/ISVA

“It is underused, website is appalling, and I have never had any positive feedback.” DSA

“It is good for referring.” NST member

“The leaflets are terrible, not survivor focused or compassionate.” Survivor/DSA

Observations from Discussions

The views brought to the ISB for this report in relation to Safe Spaces have been consistent and clear. They shared several consistent themes related to the service and their understanding of the services offer. The conversations with participants in the ISB’s work also involved speaking with survivors involved in the initial discussions of Safe Spaces. This provided the ISB with the opportunity to hear the views of those involved at the beginning, who shared that the service offered by Safe Spaces does not reflect the original specification. Their feedback was that this has impacted on the original aims and objectives as they were informed by survivors.

What is clear is that there remains a need for improvement, and to provide a service where call-handlers can respond specifically and knowledgeably to matters of church abuse. There is a disconnect or at least a distinct difference of opinion between Safe Spaces’ Directors, the NST, and what the ISB has heard from participants in the work done for this report, regarding what survivors and those that respond to them say about their experience from this vital service. The majority of those who shared their views with the ISB believed there was a need for improvement, based on

their experiences of the service and of referrals into it. They also reflected that from what they could ascertain there was still too little awareness about the service. This feedback also arose from my conversations with those leading in safeguarding practice in diocese and elsewhere.

The Safe Spaces website and hard copy resources (leaflets available to parishes and dioceses to distribute as needed) were deemed not to speak to the experiences of church abuse. Participants considered they are not framed in survivor voices and that the Safe Spaces website does not sufficiently prominently share survivor experiences.

It is concerning that that the experiences of so many of those who have accessed support and those in support roles out in dioceses and other bodies have little confidence in the Safe Spaces service. Furthermore, sadly the project as originally configured in the pilot phase did not profile the service using a broader communications strategy, to enable it to raise greater awareness. This is vital, not only to reach those who have yet to seek support, but also as a quotable example of the CofE responding positively to offering support to victims and survivors.

The ISB was sadly not able to have sight of the work in progress related to the final evaluation report from the independent evaluators (Rocket Science) which will be published in late 2022, following completion of the pilot in September 2022.

Recommendation 21

The NST provides the ISB with concrete and proven assurance that the survivor community and those who support them are fully engaged with the Rocket Science Evaluation.

The CofE provides a final date for the report that will be used to inform the next phase of a survivor focused support service, clearly time-tabled and with an equally clear end date.

The future for the proposed new service, learning from the pilot phase, must demonstrate a clear plan that engages with the survivor community, involving their consistent engagement to inform the specification of a post-pilot phase service. The plan should set out opportunities for co-production that is costed to ensure that the service, and all communication outlets are survivor informed and co-constructed.

Any future service should ensure that those providing support are trained in dealing with all forms of church-based abuse, including spiritual abuse.

This ISB report should be considered part of the evidence base for the Rocket Science final Evaluation Report on the pilot phase.

Searching for Apologies

The majority view from all conversations with the survivor community is their need for and the central importance of an apology, and a sense of how important it is that this is an early apology. It is evident from the interviews and conversations undertaken with survivors that this area of practice

has improved, and lessons are being learned. There remains a need for further improvement that will ultimately benefit victims, survivors, and the broader church community.

“Everyone wants an apology for the hurt caused and especially from leaders”. Lawyer/Survivor

“It matters that you meet and where to meet, so a neutral place matter”. Survivor

“I can now be in a room with dog collars without being freaked out, but there will be some that are not there yet.” Survivor in receipt of an apology

“It is often the DSA that facilitates apologies.” DSA

“Things are changing but this area is a real fear for some bishops”.

“I just wanted an apology (2017) jump forward, now I want more because of the lack of consideration, it is retraumatising and a further injustice.” Survivor

“It is key for a Bishop’s office to handle and communicate apologies well”. Bishop

“Those seeking apologies and offering support often feel like they are paddling underwater, there is often a sense of hopelessness on both parts.” DSA

“Helplessness for those supporting survivors can often be perceived as defensiveness.” NST

The ISB acknowledge that there is already a policy framework in existence for managing apologies. However, this report identifies that there remain gaps between framework and practice in some areas, and a need for consistent approaches to apologies. It has become evident in the course of work done towards this report that responses continue to vary across the church. It was clear that members of the NST, particularly the most senior members become involved in apologies and often give numerous apologies, as one person shared how he received fifteen from NST Directors or senior members of their teams.

There is evidence of where the ready offering of sincere apologies has worked. In all these cases that success relates to the approach of Bishops, their deliberate and considered leadership, and their willing engagement. There was a benefit reflected on by some participants, in meeting with the bishop to bring some survivors closer to a sense of closure which for some people, no amount of therapy could achieve.

The ISB does not suggest this is a solution for all, but when it is done well and in good time, such resolution can be extremely beneficial for some survivors. The opposite is true when apologies are not person-centred or are words rather than proven by action. This can make things worse, and this distinction reinforces the need for consistency in approaches, possibly related to the necessary training for Bishops.

Many participants shared how the value of apologies can diminish when it goes through lawyers before it is offered, raising the question of the engagement of CofE lawyers in some degree of pastoral training so that they are better informed of what a recipient may feel.

“The initial and ongoing pastoral response to survivors must not be reliant upon the legally driven assessment of their claim. Whilst legal assessments are vital, they must not act as a ‘gatekeeper’ for compassionate responses or proper pastoral care. This dynamic has caused much of the harm done by the church to survivors in the past. The church must find a way of keeping pastoral response and legal assessment separate as far as possible.” DSA

Case Example: Profound Impact of an Apology

Most victims and survivors stated that a lack of leadership not only contributed to their trauma but also, for some, their fractious ongoing relationship with the CofE. Others were clear that where apologies were provided in good time, were authentic and considered, this provided huge and ongoing support and comfort.

All victims and survivors who took part shared a view about the personal significance of apologies. Each one however gave testimony that was very moving, to the point that their journey to achieving the apology was extremely painful to hear. We are grateful that they considered themselves able to continue to share their stories.

We share below the following case study which highlights the immense significance of apologies and the urgent need to identify a consistent approach to this area of policy.

This survivor shared his experiences in great depth, and we share the significance of an apology that impacts on his life today.

The survivor finally found the courage to come forward to disclose the abuse he had experienced by members of the CofE after hearing the Archbishop of Canterbury give evidence to the IICSA. This evidence which he described as sincere was also to be the trigger that prompted his need for an apology from the Archbishop of Canterbury. It mattered that the apology came from the most senior leader of the church, because this was significant to his personal ability to heal.

The survivors’ parents did not offer him full support with the abuse he had experienced, and he believed they also struggled - with its enormity, and to believe what happened to him. He described his arduous journey in reaching the Archbishop of Canterbury for an apology and how it changed when his DSA began to advocate on his behalf. Finally, he received a handwritten apology from the archbishop and the following is extremely powerful with respect to the impact this had and is having on his life:

“This letter was so important to me Jasvinder, that I actually slept for the first time in years, not a broken sleep, but a full sleep because I finally felt believed by the head of the church”

“The Archbishops letter has even changed the view of my parents, who completely believe me now, because they say, if he believes you, how can we not believe you”

“It also gave me the courage to share with my son what happened to me, this was something I have been wanting to do and it was also to keep him safe and my future grandchildren, the apology gave me this courage”

The ISB wishes to reinforce how the importance of early and sincere and consistent apologies cannot be underestimated and the need for a consistent approach.

Observations/Further Exploration Needed

There remains a need to understand the responses from lawyers to victims and survivors to ensure they are also delivering person-centred responses as detailed in this report. This was an area of significant and consistent concern for all victims and survivors that had engaged with church lawyers.

The ISB met survivors to hear their experiences of church lawyers and insurers in which they shared personal experiences, and all held strong views. The survivor community and its members are often in crisis when engaging with church lawyers. It may be helpful to hold a further discussion group to hear broader views, including one with church lawyers. This is to ensure survivor views are communicated and church lawyers are provided with the opportunity to engage and to consider an informed plan of action that provides assurances to survivors for future engagement.

Further Exploration Required

What are the church lawyers' and insurers' perspectives on engaging with victims and survivors? Do they need to review / censor the nature of the apology?

Do they have a shared understanding of how victims and survivors in crisis experience their engagement?

Are they aware of the need for Special Measures and/or an understanding of them?

Recommendation 22

The NST should seek the views of the survivor community in relation to their experiences with church insurers.

The NST should seek assurances related to the engagement and approaches of church lawyers with survivors and they have regard for the views of victims and survivors that further informs their practice.

Ethics Policy

Some participants commented that the CofE should consider adopting an Ethics Policy, which is worthy of note, not only for the ISB but for the broader church. The scope and purpose of such a policy would need further discussion, however this would provide an opportunity to build on the vision we are all working to achieve.

The need to develop policies that are underpinned by fundamental principles of integrity, objectivity, professional competence and due care, confidentiality, and professional behaviour, have been clearly communicated by victims and survivors. The ISB supports this view, and considers that a clear, accessible, and consistently applied Ethics Policy should be considered alongside the continued need to manage expectations as detailed elsewhere in this report.

Involvement of Bishops

It is evident that Bishops have some engagement with victims and survivors, beyond those Bishops who have specific safeguarding leads for the CofE. This is an area of importance to the survivor community that often turn to them for support and leadership. Therefore, the need for consistent approaches remains important as not to do so, can contribute to distress for victims and survivors.

This is not just in the need to ensure apologies are given and received, but other practice areas, as detailed below:

“If you move a Bishop that was supporting someone, then please do a handover”

“Survivors felt too much trust is given to bishops. Where this is exercised to communicate safeguarding then it is a positive thing, but safeguarding weighs heavily on many of us”

“Bishops that have a safeguarding lead need the time to undertake the tasks it requires”

“Those with safeguarding leads in CofE need to be visible to the survivor community and clearly communicate what they do?”

“What is their role? This is another area where there can be misunderstanding and a point of higher expectations for survivors”

“Disappointments are born out of expectations; we need to be clear”

“It needs to be clearer, say what you can and cannot do or survivors will see you as the point of contact”

“Some survivors think we are a one-stop shop and hold more power with safeguarding leads, and this is so far from the truth”

“I am mindful that I am part of an organisation that has perpetuated horrendous abuse, it has failed victims, but this is not a reason for a lack of boundaries”

“You have to go a long way down the line before you stop engaging with a victim or survivor, so you do put up with less than you deserve”

“I emailed the Bishop SG lead, complete waste of time, they have no time for us” Survivor

Consistent Survivor Views - Key suggestions, majority of which are centred in this report:

Disclosures should be responded to in 24 hours.

Place ISB and other relevant posters on information about and resources on safeguarding in all church spaces.

Who is looking after victims and survivors in the NST?

Victims/survivors should not go through NST, unless there is a person-centred team to respond to them that includes survivors being available to talk to.

What is a Safeguarding Issue? We need a definition.

Survivor chaplaincy is important and is being developed so please build on this.

A dedicated small fund for those in crisis to access independent legal advice.

A list of psychotherapist/counsellors with experience of church abuse.

Acknowledge the hurt right at the beginning and please see the child, if it was non-recent abuse, he or she is in the room with you.

Urgently communicate openly the progress of Redress Scheme – This has been key for victims, survivors and those supporting them. This is required now and should not be left until there is a communication strategy.

Aim for practice whereby those in crisis should only ever have to give their account once.

Communicate NFA rational, even a small, detailed explanation to explain the decision.

There is a need to have a conversation about ISS so that all people with the need for longer term emotional support can access this, including those being referred to by local Diocese.

Train all in the process of grief/shame etc.

We need NST to understand those in crisis will turn to them, create a compassionate team with the right skills to respond and to be able to keep listening.

Concluding Thoughts:

The members of the ISB share an overarching agreement and acknowledgment that things are not only changing for the future but have continued to change for the better in safeguarding, whilst sharing an appreciation that the church remains on this journey. This was reinforced by the sharing of various examples such as the following quotes:

“If you had asked a church warden in 2017 for help, especially about one of their own, you would have been told over my dead body”.

“That jumping forward to 2022, if you randomly asked someone in the church what is, or have you heard of safeguarding that they would say yes”.

Many references have been made that relate to individuals across dioceses that have demonstrated the greatest possible care, respect, and attention. This includes Bishops, DSAs and ISVAs and this should not only be recognised but equally communicated as widely and as prominently as possible, given the narrative otherwise takes too little account of positives in the CofE’s continued development.

There are many things to celebrate in safeguarding in the CofE, that include the tireless work of those responding and where survivor engagement has shaped, informed, and changed policy and practice. Leaders have resolutely attended to areas that required improvement for survivors. This can be evidenced, one example being the recent change in extending the Interim Support Scheme to provide longer term support for those in need of therapeutic support. However, there was too little evidence of how such good practice and its clear positive outcomes are being communicated across the Church of England, which the ISB believes to be a missed opportunity.

The ISB has a clear role to provide our reports without fear or favour. My role on behalf of the ISB is specifically to act as the Survivor Advocate. This requires me to hear the experiences and views of victims and survivors for the ISB to ensure safeguarding policy and practice frameworks are not only embedded but that the views of victims and survivors are acted upon.

This report has been informed by victim, survivors, and those directly responsible for both providing support and developing policy and practice. It has been important to consider relevant reports, books, policy, and good practice papers to further inform this report. The ISB wishes to acknowledge previous reports already published within this area or policy and practice, some of which echo themes findings and recommendations in this report.

Our hope is that all readers will find this report insightful and highly valuable in contributing towards supporting victims, survivors, and all those working tirelessly to support them.

Appendix 1

Dear

I am the Survivor Advocate for the Independent Safeguarding Board (ISB), which was created by The Archbishops Council to provide oversight of The National Safeguarding Team (NST). The purpose is to ensure safeguarding in the Church of England is soundly governed and independently overseen. I am a member of the ISB which includes two other members and we have varied duties; however, I also have the specific task that relates to victims and survivors. This is to ensure the experiences and views of both are heard and embedded within the safeguarding policy and practice development frameworks.

The ISB wishes to ensure that victims and survivors inform its work at this early stage of its development and consider a framework model for future engagement. To this regard I am arranging 'Survivor Conversations' over the April and May 2022, to the experiences and views. I also sincerely wish to hear about your experiences as an ISVA and/or DSA, as your role is critical to supporting victims and survivors.

I understand ISVA/DSA's support that those in need of support as they may have been hurt by the church and possibly have/are involved in church processes/policies and procedures. This may have meant being involved in processes (list is not exhaustive) such as Clergy Discipline Measure (CDM), seeking clergy support, Interim Support Scheme (ISS) etc. The purpose of these confidential conversations is to ensure that your voices inform the ISB to consider future improvements for victims and survivors based on your work. These voices will be advocated as part of our work to those in positions of leadership. I am keen to hear your experiences related to any challenges as an ISVA/DSA, areas for improvement, good practice models and any specific gaps or areas for improvement for victims and survivors.

I understand and appreciate the pain and trauma experienced by victims and survivors and really would like to understand your perspectives related to managing the expectations of victims and survivors. I am also a survivor of trauma and believe such personal testimonies, including those who support individuals must inform future changes, thus, to make a difference in the journey to make the Church one of the safest places.

I appreciate the history of this journey towards safeguarding and acknowledge the pain of many and the ISB is an independent body that seeks to ensure the Church is held publicly accountable for any future recommendations. This journey is not possible without your engagement, and I sincerely wish to engage so that you are part of this journey towards changes for safeguarding and supporting victims and survivors.

Niamh is the Project Officer for the ISB, who is currently planning dates for those who wish to engage. Please may I request that you respond directly to Niamh with any questions and to identify a suitable date. May I thank you in advance for your consideration and share that I very much looking forward to our conversation and advocating your views, including areas for future development informed by your roles.

Best wishes,

Jasvinder Sanghera CBE

Appendix 2

Dear

I am the Survivor Advocate for the Independent Safeguarding Board (ISB), which was created by The Archbishops Council to provide oversight of The National Safeguarding Team (NST). Our primary purpose is to ensure safeguarding in the Church of England is soundly governed and independently overseen, and to advise on what a future independent safeguarding body should look like once the current phase 1 of work ends in late 2023.

The ISB includes two other members, one being the Chair, the other an independent member. We each have varied duties. Mine include specific tasks that relate to victims and survivors. It is my role, and through me the role of the Board, to ensure their experiences and views are heard and embedded within the church's safeguarding policy and practice.

The ISB wishes to ensure victims and survivors inform its work including considering a framework model for engagement. To this end I am arranging 'Survivor Conversations' over April and May 2022, in which I wish to hear your views. I sincerely wish to hear about your experiences, especially from those hurt by the church who may have sought support which may have involved being involved in church processes, policies, and procedures. This may have meant being involved in processes (list is not exhaustive) such as Clergy Discipline Measure (CDM), seeking clergy support, Interim Support Scheme (ISS) etc. I appreciate that every experience is unique and that it is not easy to share and sincerely wish to assure you that all that you share will be in confidence. The purpose of these conversations is to ensure that your voices inform the ISB to consider and make recommendations to the church and wider society about, future improvements for victims and survivors. These voices will be advocated as part of our work to those in positions of leadership.

I am also a survivor of trauma and believe such personal testimonies must inform future changes to make a difference and to make the Church one of the safest places in society. I appreciate the history of this journey towards safeguarding and acknowledge the pain of many. The ISB is an independent body that seeks to ensure the Church is held accountable. This journey is not possible without your engagement, and I sincerely wish to engage so that you are part of this journey towards change for victims and survivors.

Niamh is the Project Officer for the ISB, currently planning dates for those who wish to engage. Please may I request that you respond directly to Niamh with any questions and to identify a suitable date. I am willing to be flexible and if you wish to meet later in the day, including evenings, this can also be arranged. May I thank you in advance for your consideration and share that I very much looking forward to our conversation and advocating your views, including areas for future development informed by your personal journeys.

Best wishes,

Jasvinder Sanghera CBE

Appendix 3

References

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Bread not Stones: We asked for Bread, but you gave us Stones was a 16-page booklet of survivor's comments gathered by Andrew Graystone, an advocate and campaigner alongside survivors (February 2018)

Diocese of Chichester: Confidential: Reflections of Victim Support During Operation Dunhill

Ecclesiastical – Guiding Principles for the handling of civil claims involving allegations of sexual and physical abuse

Escaping The Maze of Spiritual Abuse: Dr Lisa Oakley & Justine Humphreys, thirty-one: eight (2019)

Falling Among Thieves-Understanding and Responding to Church Related-Abuse: Andrew Graystone, William Temple Foundation (2022)

House of Survivors – Website Resources: House of Survivors is an information-based site for Survivors of Church of England based abuse and Safeguarding employees within the CofE.

If I Told You, What Would You Do? Website Resources

Independent Learning Lessons Case Review - Graham Gregory: Ray Galloway February 2022

Letters to a Broken Church: Edited by Janet Fife and Gilo, Speak Out Survivors Ekklesia (2019)

MACSAS- Website Resources: This website offers useful resources and telephone and email helpline for victims and survivors of Minister and Clergy sexual abuse – and for relatives of victims and survivors. Supporting both Survivors who have remained within their Christian communities and those who have left.

National Safeguarding Panel – Papers Discussing Interim Support Scheme (2022)

NHS – Zero Tolerance Policy, Gov.UK

Past Review 2 (PCR 2)

Rocket Science: Safe Spaces Project Evaluation – Confidential Interim Report November 2021

Survivor Voices – Website Resources: Survivors Voices is a survivor-led organisation that recognises the shared perspective of anyone who has experienced abuse, trauma or violence as a child or an adult and the power of sharing stories with those who understand. They believe survivors are experts in their own healing and as such their stories and perspectives need to inform policy and practice in response to abuse, trauma and violence

Survivor Reference Group (SRG) Memorandum of Understanding

Survivor Voices: Online Meeting Safety Guidelines

Supporting the Pastoral and Spiritual Needs of Survivors of Abuse – Discussion Paper

Safe Spaces Project Evaluation – Baseline Report:

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Policies Areas Considered:

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Interim Support Scheme Processes & Terms of Reference

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Involving Survivors in Church of England Safeguarding Practice: National Safeguarding Team Honorariums and Expenses Policy

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Promoting a Safer Church; House of Bishops Policy Statement (2017)

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