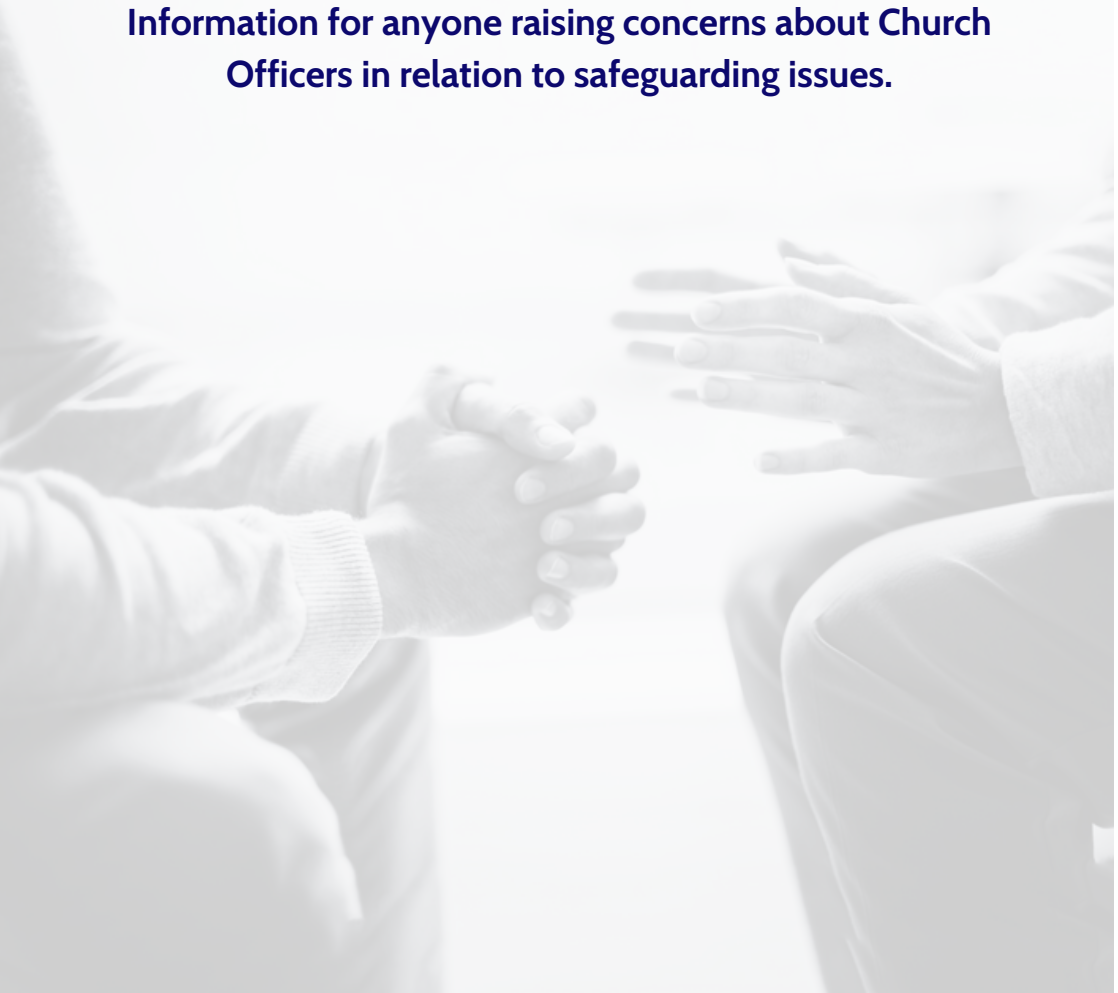


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# Information for **COMPLAINANTS**

**Information for anyone raising concerns about Church  
Officers in relation to safeguarding issues.**



# Introduction & Terminology

Many people who raise safeguarding concerns will have been directly affected by the alleged behaviour. They may be seen as “victims” or “survivors” but some may prefer different terms. Others expressing concerns may be third parties who are reporting what they see as risk or harm to others. This leaflet is primarily intended for those who have been directly affected, but much of it also applies to third parties.

The words we use to describe those who have experienced abuse are, of course, important and sensitive. But we should not let the sensitivity get in the way of ensuring that anyone expressing concern is given both support and information during an investigation.

Safeguarding cases in the Church of England follow the requirements contained in a lengthy document, “Practice Guidance: Responding to, Assessing and Managing Safeguarding Concerns or Allegations against Church Officers” (2017). This document is currently (2023) subject to review; it uses the terms “victim” and “survivor” for those directly affected by abusive behaviour and “respondent” for anyone alleged to have caused harm in that way.

The Practice Guidance requires that support for victims is governed by the six principles of adult safeguarding:

- Empowerment
- Protection
- Prevention
- Partnership
- Proportionality
- Accountability

Thus, victims will be offered both support and information about the investigation process and decisions which are made within it. They will have choices in what, if any, support to accept, what information they will find useful and how they would like to receive it.

# Am I able to make an **anonymous complaint?**

If you are in two minds about coming forward, the best advice is to discuss this with the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser at the earliest possible stage. You will understand that it is always better if the Diocese is made aware of a potential risk than that it remains hidden. Only in that way can potential victims be protected.

It is possible to at least commence, and sometimes to complete, an investigation when a third-party complainant does not want to be identified.

Similarly, the wishes of anyone directly affected who wants to remain anonymous will be respected, but you should be aware that it may make it more difficult to carry out a conclusive investigation. However, every piece of information about risk is important and can help to build up a bigger picture of what is happening.

No-one's identity will be shared without their approval, unless a report to a statutory service is required because there is an identified risk of harm.

# What **support** will I be offered?

The provision of a specialist Support Person will be discussed with all those who express concerns, raise allegations or make complaints about Church officers (which includes clergy) on safeguarding issues. This is a specific role and Support Persons are trained and supervised in it. The offer is in addition to any purely pastoral or personal support which may be offered by the Diocese. Thus, you may be offered two named contacts. If you have expressed concern on behalf of others, but have not been directly affected, your support needs will be discussed with you and will be met as seems most appropriate. The offer of a Support Person may, however, not always be necessary.

Where the offer of a trained Support Person is made and accepted, their involvement will be set out in an individualised role description agreed with you. Further information about this is in a separate leaflet on the Support Person role, which will be offered to you. In general terms, the role may include:

- Liaison with any statutory services about your needs.
- Identifying and offering choices for the provision of therapeutic or other services thought necessary for you.
- Listening to and representing your views within the management of the case. However, the Support Person does not act formally as an advocate on your behalf.
- Recording contacts with you and passing relevant information to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser.
- It will be made clear to you from the outset that your relationship with a Support Person is not entirely confidential; for example, if there appears to be ongoing risk to other individuals.

# The investigation & what may happen after

Safeguarding investigations are generally concluded quickly, certainly as quickly as possible, though there may sometimes be unavoidable delays. If there is a Police investigation, for example, that will usually need to be completed before the Diocesan investigation can proceed.

Every investigation is overseen by a Core Group, usually chaired by an Archdeacon (one of the senior clergy in the Diocese). The Church Guidance requires that a Core Group is set up within 48 hours of allegations or concerns being received. The group makes all the decisions needed during the investigation and also determines what happens immediately after it.

You should be aware that the completion of the safeguarding investigation is not usually the end of the process. If there is credible evidence of risk from the respondent, the next stage will usually be a formal risk assessment. There may also be disciplinary action at some stage, which can sometimes take a long time. You will be supported through whatever follows the investigation and advised on the progress of the case in line with your wishes.

Support for you does not end when the case is finally concluded; it can be ongoing depending on your needs and wishes.

You may receive an apology from the Diocese for the harm caused to you. This cannot happen before the completion of any Police or statutory investigation. When it happens, it will be in writing and accompanied by an offer of a meeting with you. Once again, it would be your choice whether to accept. You would be able to have someone with you if you chose to attend a meeting.

Where harm is acknowledged, it may be possible to make a claim for compensation. The Church's insurers and Diocesan Registrar (legal adviser) will be involved in that process. In the first instance, you should consult the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser on how to submit a claim.

Another leaflet is available which covers issues of support as well as interim financial help and longer-term redress. The title of it is "Responding Well: A Guide to Support for Victims and Survivors of Church-based Abuse". A copy will be offered to you. It covers therapeutic support from a qualified and registered practitioner, the Support Person role (explained in this leaflet), spiritual and pastoral support and access to independent sources of advice and support.

## Contact information



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