

Safe Spaces Newsletter

Quarterly Newsletter - Issue 4
November 2021



Hello and welcome to the autumn edition of the Safe Spaces newsletter

Thank you for joining the mailing list to receive our newsletter. If you have received this via a contact and you would like to receive it directly, please contact us at:

safespacesfeedback@victimsupport.org.uk

In this autumn edition we'll be updating you on what the Safe Spaces team have been up to and sharing some extra content from people who have used our service.

Service Update (by Donna)

We're sorry this newsletter is coming to you a little later than usual. I had hoped to have it to you in September but we have been so busy. Here is a taste of what we have been up to.

Safe Spaces is now over 1 year old! We have provided our annual report for the Safe Spaces board which was compiled and completed last month. We were able to report that we have supported 202 individuals so far and recorded 4112 different activities in relation to contact with our service users. This includes phone calls, emails, live chats, video calls and text messaging.

In addition we have advocated 198 times on behalf of our clients and provided 527 with emotional support. We also supported our users with personal safety advice, signposting and referral to specialised support where needed. Well done to my team for your continued passion and hard work that keeps this service running.

The grants assessment panel, made up of steering group members and I have run two rounds of the grants scheme. More information about this can be found on page 3.

We have recruited 2 new members of staff. Linda is our new caseworker and Trudy is our new administrator. We will be featuring each of them in a short article on page 3. We have two victims and survivors who were part of the recruitment panel for the case worker role, the perspectives of these individuals were invaluable in our selection process and final decision making.

Both team members have been very busy engaging with all mandatory training and have benefited from meeting the rest of the team in person for the first time since lockdown ended, this allowed us to provide in person support and training. It was brilliant that we got to meet them in person.

How to contact us...

Safe Spaces is open:

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday,
Friday and Saturday: 10am - 6pm

Thursday: 12pm - 8pm

Sunday: Closed

Email:

safespaces@victimsupport.org.uk

Phone:

0300 303 1056

Website and Live Chat:

safespacesenglandandwales.org.uk

If you'd like to chat with us via live chat please visit our website. You can do so anonymously, if you prefer, and this service is available during the opening hours above.

When Safe Spaces is closed, you can leave a voicemail or drop us an email. We will get back to you as soon as we are able to.

If you are in crisis or need immediate help call 999.

Safe Spaces Grants Service Update *(by Donna)*

Safe Spaces launched its grant service in July. Grants information and the application were uploaded to the Safe Spaces website and distributed far and wide. A grants selection committee was set up, consisting of three steering group members who were also survivors of church related abuse and myself as project manager.

For Round 1, we received 8 applications and made positive decision on 4 of them.

The successful projects were:

Newcastle Diocese: Church of England – If I Told you What Would You Do?

The proposed project was to design and develop accessible multimedia resources and materials to engage survivors of church based abuse and educate those who need to respond well to them.

Survivors' Voices: Church of England - #Church Too Programme

Survivors' voices will pilot 3 peer support groups run by survivors of church abuse, with 2 distinct formats to meet the needs of different groups.

- 'Unshamed' will run a church-based group for survivors and others with 6 biblically based sessions aimed at healing and empowerment
- 'Unbinding' (for survivors only) will run in a diocese in partnership with the Safeguarding Team and a virtual national group

MACSAS (Survivors Reference Group): Church of England

The grant money will allow the SRG to continue its work. Key activities include policy consultation and development in relation to safeguarding, survivor engagement and redress, training and development and delivery, sitting on interview panels, advocating for Church abuse survivors and peer support.

The Voices of Awareness Creative Media Group (VOACMG): Catholic Church – “Dedicated to supporting you to develop your own ideas”

Survivors of Institutional Abuse establishing, managing, hosting and expanding creative media platforms to amplify the diversity of voices, perspectives, concerns, wisdom, expertise, lived experiences and ideas of all survivors of institutional abuse equally.

In fact, Voices of Awareness are recruiting a new administrator to fulfil this role. You can find the advert here:

Round 2 was swiftly advertised and we will provide details of the grants provided in the next Safe Spaces Newsletter.

Something about Linda: Our New Case Worker



My name is Linda I joined the Safe Spaces team in September this year. My previous job was as CEO of a registered charity based in West Yorkshire supporting families whose lives have been affected by sexual abuse. The charity closed in 2019 due to lack of funding which prompted myself and my husband to make the move to Northumberland. I applied for the post at Safe Spaces as I have had many years' experience of supporting survivors of abuse and I welcome the challenge of learning more about the structures of the churches, however the main reason I applied is I enjoy being part of a team, offering support and sharing knowledge with each other.

In my spare time I enjoy walking my dogs on the beach every day. I also absolutely love spending time with my children and grandchildren.

Something about Trudy: Our New Administrator

Hi I'm Trudy - I live in the Yorkshire area and I have 2 mad spaniels who you can see from these pics, enjoy playing in the mud and being at the seaside! I joined Safe Spaces after leaving the NHS to retrain as a therapeutic counsellor. I use my skills in administration to support the team with report writing. Safe Spaces not only allows me to broaden my outlook on abuse in an area I was not familiar with, but as administrator I use my experience to compile the data that goes into reports which identify and validate the hard work of the team and the need for the service. I have an insight into some of the difficulties people face when trying to share their experiences and how this impacts their lives. The team all work really hard and provide so much support for others, compiling information to reflect their efforts is a pleasure.

My weekends are taken up with volunteering for a local charity who support the mental and physical wellbeing of the local community

I also make soy wax candles for friends, family and me! Full of natural essential oils, I'm always relaxed when in production!

I'm a massive Great British Bake Off fan and can knock up a good meringue when occasion calls for it!





As Victim Support marks the one year anniversary of the service supporting victims and survivors of church based abuse, the organisation reflects on how important survivor's involvement and essential feedback is in providing the right environment for people to be heard. In our 'compliments' section of the November newsletter you will be able to read for yourselves how much of a positive impact the Safe Spaces Project has been for one individual. But this outcome is reliant not only on survivors coming forward, but the Safe Spaces Team as a whole.....

The team is comprised of trained support advocates, who have undergone specialist training in supporting survivors of sexual violence and have qualified as recognised Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA). Also specifically trained in how churches respond to abuse cases and the issues affecting those who have had, or still have, a relationship with the church.

The support provided over the last year by dedicated caseworkers has included advocacy with the church and other authorities, trauma informed emotional support, information, advice and mediation, as well as connecting survivors with peer support organisations.

The support of survivors who helped design and develop Safe Spaces from the beginning has been essential. Survivors have actively engaged with the service providing feedback, insight and information, and the survivor steering group has provided vital expertise in shaping and delivering the service and this was acknowledged by Victims Supports Area Manager.

"The support provided by Safe Spaces over the past year highlights the need for services supporting survivors of church-related abuse. We are immensely grateful to those survivors who have engaged with us to help shape the service, and their input, feedback and advice has been invaluable".

"As we move into our second year, we want survivors who have not yet accessed our service to know how committed we are to supporting victims of church-based abuse. Safe Spaces provides specialist support, independent of the police or any faith-based institution."

Lesley McLean, Victim Support's Area Manager

Safe Spaces Compliments

Feedback is incredibly important to the Safe Spaces Service. When we are nearing the end of support with service users, we send a form asking for feedback.

This autumn we are sharing, with the permission of the service user, the heartfelt gratitude and experience of support they felt during a most difficult time.

“Victim Support Safe Spaces has been a lifeline to me during the most difficult period of my life”

“I had suppressed the trauma of serious sexual assault for years. I knew I needed to tell the truth about what happened to me to protect others from harm. Yet the fears I had of the possible consequences terrified me. It is difficult to write this now, but my sense of responsibility for what had happened to me extended to protecting the person who raped me and the clergyman who had threatened me into silence.”

Client Sept 2021

We share the following content with the full permission of the service user concerned, they wanted to express that victims are not alone in their thoughts and feeling and that Safe Spaces Victim Support were there for them, they felt listened to and were helped to discern a course of action that was right for them. We extend our confidentiality to protect our handlers, there are no reference made to any individual for privacy reasons.

The experience of a Safe Spaces Service User

When I first called the helpline I was in a desperate state. I was signed off sick by my GP with stress and anxiety and although I had been honest with my GP about the reasons for my trauma they were not able to give me any specialist guidance other than strongly suggesting that I consider reporting the rape to the police. My contact at Safe Spaces listened to what had happened to me and was able to calmly talk me through the process. It helped so much to be heard and understood for the first time by someone who was able to give me expert guidance and knew the police reporting process well.

When I phoned 101 I was told that due to the severity of the crime I needed to go to my local police station that same day where I would be met by specialist CID officers who would take my statement. When I arrived at the police station the CID officers were not there and I had to give my statement in a room off the front reception desk within earshot of other members of the public. Being able to phone the helpline before and after this awful experience really helped me deal with what was happening.

The experience of a Safe Spaces Service User cont....

I then waited another week before the specialist officer in charge of my case was able to take my recorded statement. When the day came I was phoned, just as I was leaving the house to go to the police station, to say that due to a failure of technology at the police station it would not be possible to take the statement that day and it might be "some weeks" before another available slot might be arranged. I was devastated. My parents had travelled some distance to take care of my son while I was there and I had finally psyched myself up to do what I needed to do. Again, I phoned the safe spaces helpline and XXXXX was able to get in touch with the officer in charge of my case and explain the consequence of delaying my being able to make the statement. Within half an hour the officer in charge had found a way of rectifying the technological difficulties and my recorded statement was taken later that afternoon.

“Safe Spaces was a real blessing”

However difficult the initial police process was for me, I want to share with whoever is reading this that everything in my life has already greatly improved from having reported this crime.

Hopefully others will have a better experience but I want to share that even having had the challenges I've had I still feel a thousand times better for having reported what happened to me.

Being guided and supported every step of the way by XXXXX, XXXXX and the team at Safe Spaces was a real blessing and I cannot commend this service to you highly enough.

Third and Final Grant Application Round



Round 3 of the Safe Spaces Grants Programme

Breaking the silence of church-related abuse

Safe Spaces are now releasing Round 3 of the Grants Programme

Are you a group or project providing support to survivors of church-related abuse?
Are you wanting to set up a group to provide support to survivors of church-related abuse?
Is the support focussed around self-help?

We have grants available for new or existing groups or projects doing just that. You can apply for one-off funding of up to £5000 to kick-start a new project or to extend your services to meet the needs of victims and survivors of Church related abuse.

To be successful you'll need to be thinking about how your project promotes any, or all, of the following;

- Education
- Physical wellbeing
- Psychological Wellbeing
- Spiritual

The types of projects we'd like to see are ones which;

- Are creative
- Address loneliness and promote connectedness
- Promote peer support
- Promote physical and emotional health and wellbeing
- Promote healthy relationships

This brand-new initiative is part of the Safe Spaces Project which provides an independent helpline, advocacy and support service for adults who have experienced church-related abuse. The service is funded by the charitable company 'Safe Spaces England and Wales' (SSEW), which was formed by the Archbishops' Council (Church of England) and the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

All the information about how to apply, including the application form, can be found on the Safe Spaces website www.safespacesenglandandwales.org.uk/grant-funding/

We would encourage you to read all of the eligibility criteria before applying. The new deadline for applications is the **9th January 2022**

Safe Spaces Evaluation



Rocket Science, an independent research and evaluation organisation, has been commissioned by Safe Spaces England Wales to evaluate the Safe Spaces service, delivered by Victim Support.

The Safe Spaces service is currently being evaluated by Rocket Science an independent research and evaluation organisation. One of the aims of the evaluation is to understand the impact of the service for those who have accessed it. The evaluation will be conducted by a trained team of researchers at Rocket Science, who are all experience in trauma informed research.

If you are currently being supported by Safe Spaces or have previously been in contact with the service, they would like to hear about your experience.

An on-line survey is available here <https://www.research.net/r/HHSJW7W>

The survey should take no more than 7 minutes to complete, all answers are completely anonymous and confidential and the survey only asks about your experience of using the Safe Spaces service. Contact details for Rocket Science can also be found by following the link.

In the next newsletter, we are hoping that we will be in a position to provide an update from the evaluation and your input.

Can you help us with future newsletters?

We at Safe Spaces hope that eventually this newsletter will be co-produced with service users. We therefore welcome anyone who has engaged with us to write to us with any suggestions for input, or even write an article.

Keeping in touch

If you would like to continue to receive our quarterly newsletter please email safespacesfeedback@victimsupport.org.uk

If you have already registered to receive this newsletter you will remain on our mailing list, until you ask to be removed. If you know of anyone who would like to receive our newsletter in the future, ask them to email us directly @safespacesfeedback