

# Safe Spaces

Issue No. 1  
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Quarterly newsletter

## Hello and welcome to our first quarterly Safe Spaces newsletter

My name is Donna, Project Manager of Safe Spaces, and in this first edition we'll be telling you about the service, what we do, who we are and what other support is available within Victim Support.

As this is our first newsletter, we'd be really interested to receive some feedback from you about what you would like to see more or less of in future newsletter. The newsletter is for you so if you would like to contribute articles or ask for further information about specific things, please get involved and let us know.

**Donna**

### What is Safe Spaces?

Safe Spaces is a service delivered by Victim Support and funded by the Church of England and the Catholic Church of England and Wales.

We provide a confidential service for anyone who has experienced any kind of abuse within, or as a result of, their relationship with the Church of England, the Church in Wales, or the Catholic Church of England and Wales.

The service is provided virtually by telephone or live chat depending on what's best for you.

When you first contact us we will assess with you what your needs are and will do our best to help you address those needs. We have a number of different ways of doing this; sometimes just by listening but sometimes by talking to you about our online services such as My Support Space which we will talk about later in this newsletter.

There isn't a time limit to the service and we'll work with you on your journey to recovery.

This service is a pilot, we are learning together and so are hoping you will help us improve, and shape our future, by joining our Steering Group or Development Network.

The Safe Spaces team is made up of advocates who have knowledge and training in how the Churches respond to abuse cases, as well as the way in which faith and Church-related settings have been used to carry out abuse as well as particular issues affecting a person's relationship with the church.

### How & when you can contact us.

Safe Spaces is open:

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

Thursday: 12pm - 8pm

Sunday: Closed

#### Email

[safespaces@victimsupport.org.uk](mailto:safespaces@victimsupport.org.uk)

#### Phone

0300 303 1056

#### Website and Live Chat

[safespacesenglandandwales.org.uk](https://safespacesenglandandwales.org.uk)

If you'd like to chat with us via live chat please visit our website. You can do so anonymously, 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.

## Christmas Message from the Team

Even with the challenges of 2020 in mind, we are reminded of the good we have seen this year and the hope we can have for 2021. Our team has been privileged to meet with a high number of victims and survivors since the launch.

Whilst our connection has not been through the best of circumstances, it has been a pleasure to walk with people on their journey and see some positive and restorative outcomes. It has highlighted to us that this year especially has presented new challenges for people who have experienced abuse, or in some cases highlighted those that already existed. Yet, we are confident that there is hope in this season.

Throughout this Christmas and into the New Year we will continue to provide a service with the hope of enabling service users to pursue the outcomes that matter the most to them.

## Christmas Opening Arrangements

We understand that Christmas can be a triggering and difficult time for some people. It is important that if you are struggling during this period that you reach out for help.

Whilst we have slightly amended opening times over this period, please contact your advocate if it would be helpful to plan how you can manage emotions in advance, and how you can access support tools throughout the period. We're open:

Christmas Eve: 24th December 12pm - 5pm.

Christmas Day: 25th December through until the 28th of December: Closed

29th and 30th December: 10am - 6pm

New Year: 31st December 12pm - 5pm; 1st January Closed; 2nd January 10am - 6pm

If you need support when the Safe Spaces service is closed, Victim Support's national Supportline service is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, throughout the whole of the Christmas period. Our Supportline colleagues can offer telephone support and live chat.

Supportline is staffed by skilled and empathetic individuals, trained in dealing with trauma and crisis. You can talk to them confidentially, and anonymously if you prefer. You can also live chat at any time, and again this can be anonymous if you'd prefer.

## Excuse our appearance...

You might wonder why this newsletter comes without a Safe Spaces logo, and looks rather plain!

We're currently consulting on our logo, and we'd love to hear your thoughts. Please visit our website [safespacesenglandandwales.org.uk](https://safespacesenglandandwales.org.uk) where you'll find a link to view the options and add your votes. You can also drop us a line if you can't access the website to share your views [safespacesfeedback@victimsupport.org.uk](mailto:safespacesfeedback@victimsupport.org.uk).

Please share this link with your networks, so we can ensure we reach a logo which feels reflective of our service, and welcoming to a range of survivors affected by abuse.

In time we'll develop this newsletter to include images, and be more visually appealing.

## Meet the Team

### Donna - Project Manager

I am the project manager of Safe Spaces. Prior to taking this role, I managed a service providing support to victims and survivors of conflict in Northern Ireland commonly referred to as the 'Troubles'.

I have an open degree from the Open University that focused on psychology and crime. Additionally, I have a master's degree in Peace and Conflict. My thesis explored the experiences of victims of state violence and the relationship between the pursuit of justice and its impact on a victim's experience of trauma. I have also benefitted from training in trauma informed practice, suicide prevention and promoting wellbeing.

Since starting the role with Victim Support, the team have received extensive training in the safeguarding procedures of the Church of England and the Catholic Church of England and Wales. As well as training in spiritual abuse and survivors experiences, we are also currently training to be Independent Sexual Violence Advocates, with the Survivors Trust.

So far this role has been incredibly rewarding. It has been an honour to speak to victims and survivors, hear their experiences and provide support. I have an exceptional team, who all have demonstrated dedication and passion for supporting and advocating for victims and survivors. We are beginning to see some positive outcomes and it is such a privilege to be able to help victims and survivors to move closer towards a place of resolution of their trauma.

### Jack - Safe Spaces Advocate

I have been a Police Officer in Nottinghamshire police for almost 10 years. I have experience of supporting and working with a plethora of faith, marginalised, and under-represented groups.

My passions lie in empowering and supporting survivors by giving them a platform, as I believe no human should ever have to experience abuse or harm at the hands of another.

I want to create an environment for survivors that is inclusive, honest and warm. To learn from different experiences and empower our service users every time I make contact with them.

### Eleanor - Safe Spaces Advocate

Hi, my name is Eleanor; I am one of the Safe Spaces Advocates. Before joining the team, I co-coordinated an employability programme supporting survivors of human trafficking.

I have also been involved within the church and other voluntary organisations, supporting community initiatives and working alongside vulnerable individuals. I have benefitted from a range of training, which has guided my work with traumatised and vulnerable people, including training to be an Independent Sexual Violence Advisor.

A large portion of my work, in the past and at present, is guiding individuals to enable them to make the best decisions for themselves, and subsequently transition from a place of vulnerability to flourishing.

It has been such a pleasure to walk alongside those who have engaged with Safe Spaces, and work with wider services and the church since we launched Safe Spaces. As an advocate, it is my hope that I continue to provide a neutral and positive space, as they journey through recovery to a place of restoration.

### **Rebecca - Safe Spaces Advocate**

My name is Rebecca, and I am an advocate with the Safe Spaces team. My background is primarily in outreach work amongst children and young people, and vulnerable groups.

This has included supporting homeless communities around the UK, and offering practical and emotional support to refugees and asylum seekers from across many different countries. Much of my previous work has been centred on seeing people's hope for their future restored.

It is my desire, within this project, that survivors will be met with kindness that is warm, and a listening ear that is willing to hear the survivor's experience and place them at the centre of the work that Safe Spaces does.

### **Sophie - Administrator**

My name is Sophie and I am the administrator for the Safe Spaces team.

My previous experience mainly lies in advocating for victims in the criminal justice system and supporting them through the court process.

I have worked in both Magistrates and Crown Court, as well as spending time working in the US justice system. I have also gained experience running a free legal clinic as well as volunteering with various human rights organisations.

I am looking forward to helping Safe Spaces support survivors in an environment which is inclusive, opening and welcoming to all.

### **Online support guides**

**My Support Space (MSS)** is an online support portal to help manage the impact that traumatic events, incidents, or periods of abuse has had on you.

Whilst developed by Victim Support, this tool offers guides which are relevant to many circumstances, whether or not you consider your experience a crime. MSS is designed to be worked through either in conjunction with your Advocate, or independently.

It's easy to create an account, we don't need many details from you. Simply visit [mysupportspace.org.uk](https://mysupportspace.org.uk). You don't need to use your real name, add any personal details, and your progress is personal to you. You can access My Support Space from any computer, tablet or smartphone with internet access.

Once you've created your account you can access a range of tools to help you cope and move forward after crime. You can work through a series of interactive guides which address your specific needs.

The guides feature videos, techniques, activities and tips, and can be completed at your own pace. You can save your progress and revisit where you left off at any time. You can also create an online diary, find useful resources and request direct support.

If you might be interested please do visit the link and take a look around, you can also watch a short video too find out more.

**Silvercloud** is an online therapeutic service which offers more in-depth mental well-being support. A safe and secure online space offering personalised programmes, including Depression and Anxiety, Sleep, Stress and Resilience. Access to Silvercloud is available through our Advocates, so if this is something you might be interested in please call us.

## **Safe Spaces Website**

We're pleased to share the next phase of our website development.

Our newly improved website went live on Monday the 30th November and now includes a secure and easily accessible web-referral function. This includes tailored options for both self-referrals and partner agencies, which are sent directly to the Safe Spaces team.

Our website will continue to evolve. We're excited to add our branding and in time plan to have more advice and information available over the coming months.

## **Coming soon...**

### **Safe Spaces Steering Group**

If you'd like to help shape our future, the Steering group might be the place for you!

At this level, survivors will play an active role in ensuring the voice of the victim is heard and developing improvements to the service. This may include co-designing information materials and guidance on the development of the future work of the service.

If you'd like to find out more, or are interested in joining the Safe Spaces Steering Group please contact [safespacesfeedback@victimsupport.org.uk](mailto:safespacesfeedback@victimsupport.org.uk) and we'll send you a briefing pack.

### **Safe Spaces Development Network**

If you'd like to keep up to date with the service, but don't want to join the Steering Group, please consider our Development Network. The 'Network' will also help us to continuously improve, but won't involve formal meetings. It will function 'virtually', perhaps including email consultations or online votes. If you are interested in joining the Network drop us a line on the email above.

### **Safe Spaces Small Grants Programme**

The Safe Space Small Grant Programme will be set up soon to fund new or existing self-help based initiatives that support survivors of Church related abuse, and which promote health and well-being.

We'll announce the launch via our Network and this newsletter.

## **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](mailto:safespacesfeedback@victimsupport.org.uk)