

**For immediate release: Thursday 24 November 2022 (12 noon)**

**Support for victims and survivors of church-related abuse to continue long term with new independent provider First Light**

The Church of England, The Church in Wales and The Catholic Church in England and Wales are pleased to announce ongoing support for victims and survivors of church-related abuse, through their Safe Spaces project, with newly appointed, independent provider First Light.

Safe Spaces is a free national support service which offers a confidential, personal, and safe space for anyone who has been abused through their relationship with either the Church of England, The Church in Wales or The Catholic Church in England and Wales, regardless of age, gender or sexual orientation.

First Light is an independent organisation with extensive experience in supporting those who have experienced or are experiencing sexual abuse or domestic violence, including survivors and victims of church-related abuse.

First Light have been appointed by the Board of Trustees Of Safe Spaces England and Wales (SSEW) after a rigorous and highly competitive tender process.

The Bishop of Southampton, Debbie Sellin, a Trustee of SSEW said: "Safe Spaces provides a vital support service to those who have been affected by church-related abuse, and I am very pleased to be welcoming First Light as the new provider.

"This will build on the work of Victim Support during the pilot phase, and more recently FearLess (formerly Splitz Support Services) during the transition phase, and I would like once again to thank both these organisations for all they have done.

"I would like to reassure existing users of the service, who have already been notified of the change, that you will be supported during the transition to First Light."

Jamie Harrison, a Trustee of SSEW, added: "We would like to thank all the survivors who have been with us every step of the way from developing the initial brief to interviewing potential suppliers. Their insight and support has been vital."

Bishop Paul Mason, Safeguarding Lead for the Catholic Church, Board Member of the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA) and a Trustee of SSEW said: "The impact of abuse can be complex and life-long. It is vital that victims have a source of support from an independent body who specialise in this area. We have complete confidence that First Light will deliver this service in the long term and will make a difference for those who need it. We would like to thank every survivor who has worked with us to help ensure a continuity of support and excellence of service"

Lyn Gooding, Chief Executive of First Light said: "Our trained staff are ready to be there for any victim or survivor of church-related abuse. We know that Safe Spaces is needed, we are committed to the project for the long-term and we could not be more proud to take up this vital work."

Service users can expect a seamless transition from interim providers FearLess (formerly Splitz Support Service) which followed a successful two-year pilot of the Safe Spaces project run by Victim Support. All current service users will be contacted individually to talk through relevant information, options and to answer any questions. They can expect continuity in accessing support.

Safe Spaces can be contacted at [Safe Spaces England and Wales](#) T:0300 303 1056