

Healthy cultures and spiritual abuse

Session 1



1

Introductions



2

2.5 hours short break

Link for slides and handbook

Webcam and microphones

Sensitive and confidential

Get support

Chat facility

3

0303 003 1111
Helpline
Option 2

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Spiritual Abuse: Why it matters

“...abuse that occurred in a religious context reported that it had led to a loss of faith or a loss of trust in a religious organisation.” IICSA, 2022, p.121

- Form of emotional/psychological abuse
- Occurs in religious/faith-based contexts
- Unhealthy/harmful behaviours supported or justified by faith or holy texts (i.e. the Bible or Qur’an)

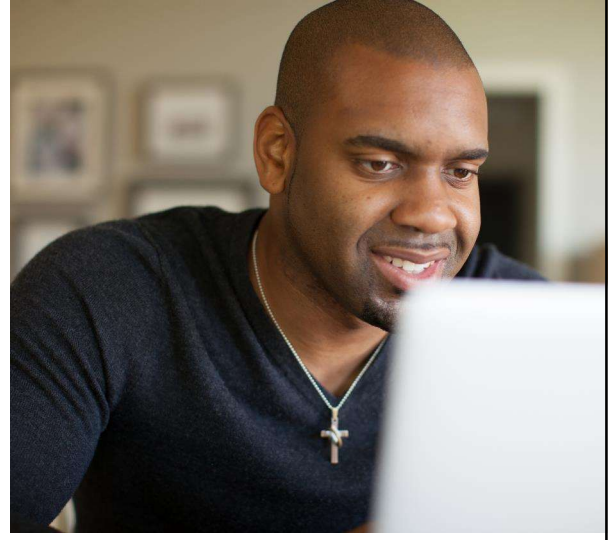
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Module 1: Healthy Christian Cultures

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In this module:

- Understanding culture
- Defining healthy cultures
- Myth of homogeneity



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Understanding culture

What we believe

How we express ourselves

How we behave towards each other

It's our normal

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Understanding culture

Marks of a healthy culture



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Understanding culture

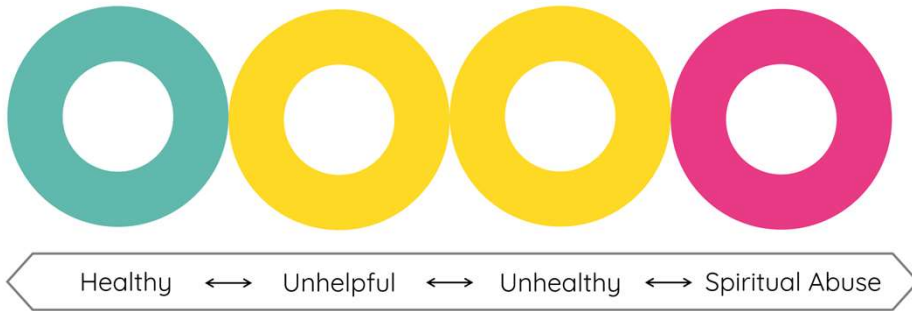
'In order to explore the issue of healthy culture in a balanced way, we need to consider how good things can be and at the same time be honest about when things go wrong and what that looks like'

Taken from: **Escaping the maze of spiritual abuse: Creating healthy Christian cultures**, Oakley & Humphreys, SPCK, 2019

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Understanding culture

A spectrum of behaviour



by Lisa Oakley, Professor of Safeguarding and Knowledge Exchange at University of Chester

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Defining healthy cultures

A healthy faith culture is one that provides emotional/psychological and physical safety.

It both offers guidance and accepts a person's right to choose.

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Defining healthy cultures

Establish good governance

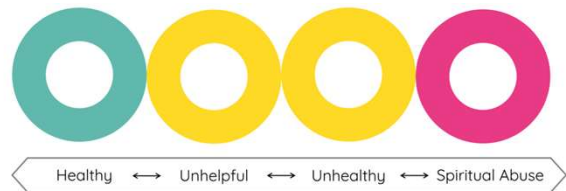
Listen well

Build effective structures

Manage power

Model safe behaviours

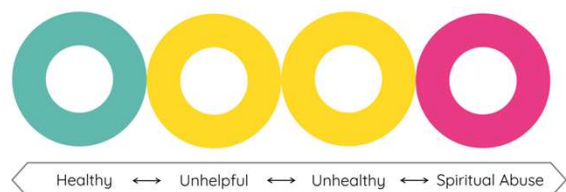
Communicate well



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Defining healthy cultures

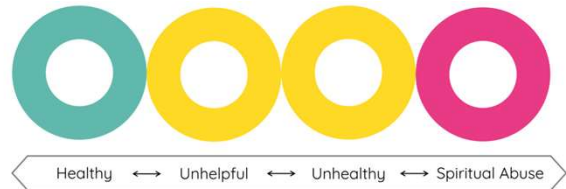
Establish good governance



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Defining healthy cultures

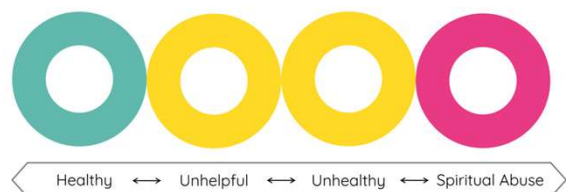
Listen well



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Defining healthy cultures

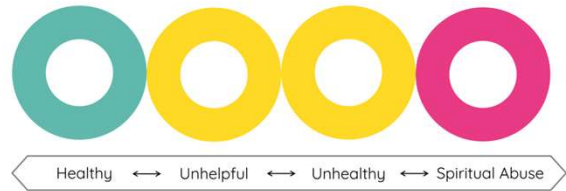
Build effective structures



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Defining healthy cultures

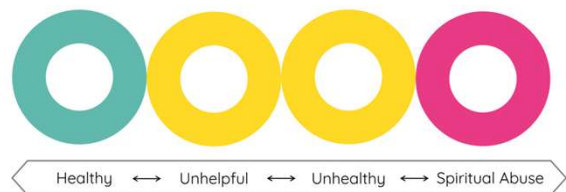
Manage power



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Defining healthy cultures

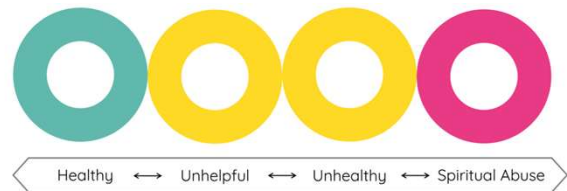
Model safe behaviours



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Defining healthy cultures

Communicate well



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Defining healthy cultures

Of the 6 components;

- Which is your strongest?
- Which is weakest?
- Are any unhealthy or harmful?

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Survivor/victim voices

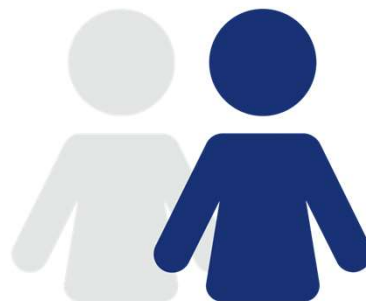
“I do not think that the idea of church being a safe place would be discussed when [individual] was Vicar.”

Taken from: **Final Report – Independent Lessons Learned Review for Emmanuel Church Wimbledon**, Thirtyone:eight, 2021

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The myth of homogeneity

People with positive characteristics can still act in abusive ways

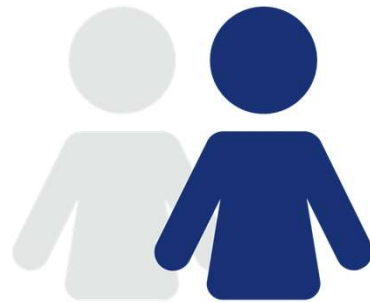


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The myth of homogeneity

Case Study:

Newspaper reports from the nine O'clock service, Sheffield



25

Any questions?



26

Break



27

Coffee break

5:00




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Module 2:

People, policies & practices

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In this module:

-  People, empowered.
-  Policy as a framework
-  Intentional practices

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People, empowered.

“Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility.”



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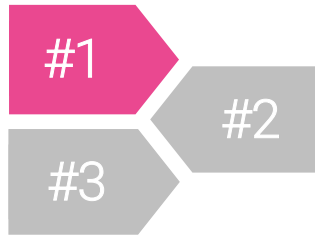
People, empowered.

- Inclusive approach
- Sit with opposites
- Unconscious bias
- Opposite exercise



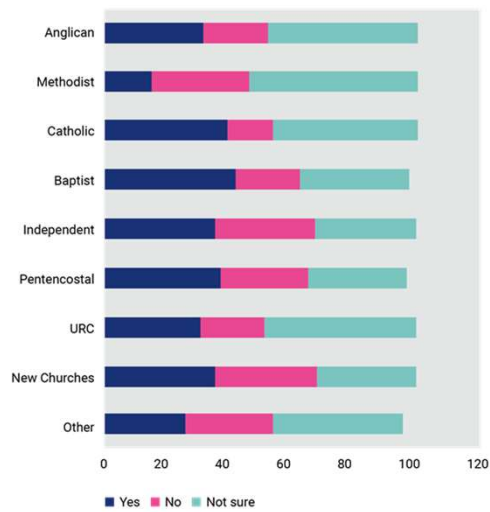
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Poll



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Policy as framework



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Policy as framework

- Spiritual abuse in Safeguarding Policy
- Whistle blowing policy
- Bullying policy
- Reporting a concern

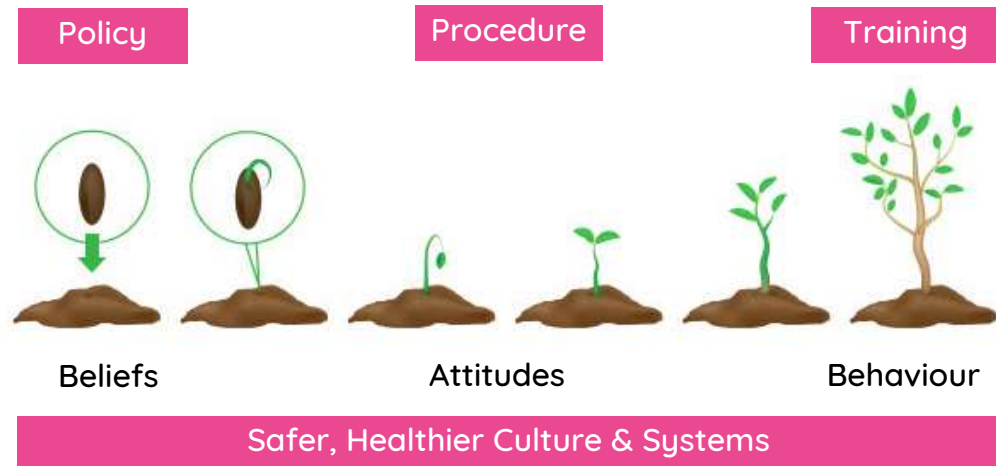
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Intentional practices

- Governance
- Visibility
- Humility
- Training

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People, policies, practices: Planting in fertile ground



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Breakout rooms

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Survivor/victim voices

“...the power, authority and reverence bestowed upon religious institutions and the individuals working within them meant that the conduct of perpetrators went unquestioned.”

Taken from: **Final Report - Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse**,
October 2022, p.384

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Any questions?



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Module 3:

Healthy cultures: Preventative. Restorative.

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In this module:



Prevention



Restoration

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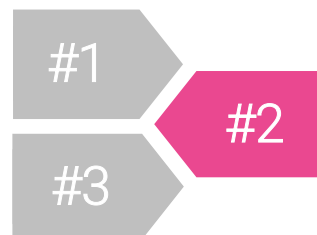
Healthy cultures: Preventative

“It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.”

– Frederick Douglass

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Poll



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Healthy cultures: Restorative

“A caring and compassionate response underpinned by pastoral and spiritual support, if requested by survivors, can support recovery and healing.”

Taken from: [Safeguarding eManual, The Church of England](#), online, 2022

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Healthy cultures: Restorative What about pastoral care and prayer?

- Be guided by the individual
- Give choice, don't coerce
- Allow for the spectrum of emotion

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Any questions?



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Healthy cultures and spiritual abuse

Session 2

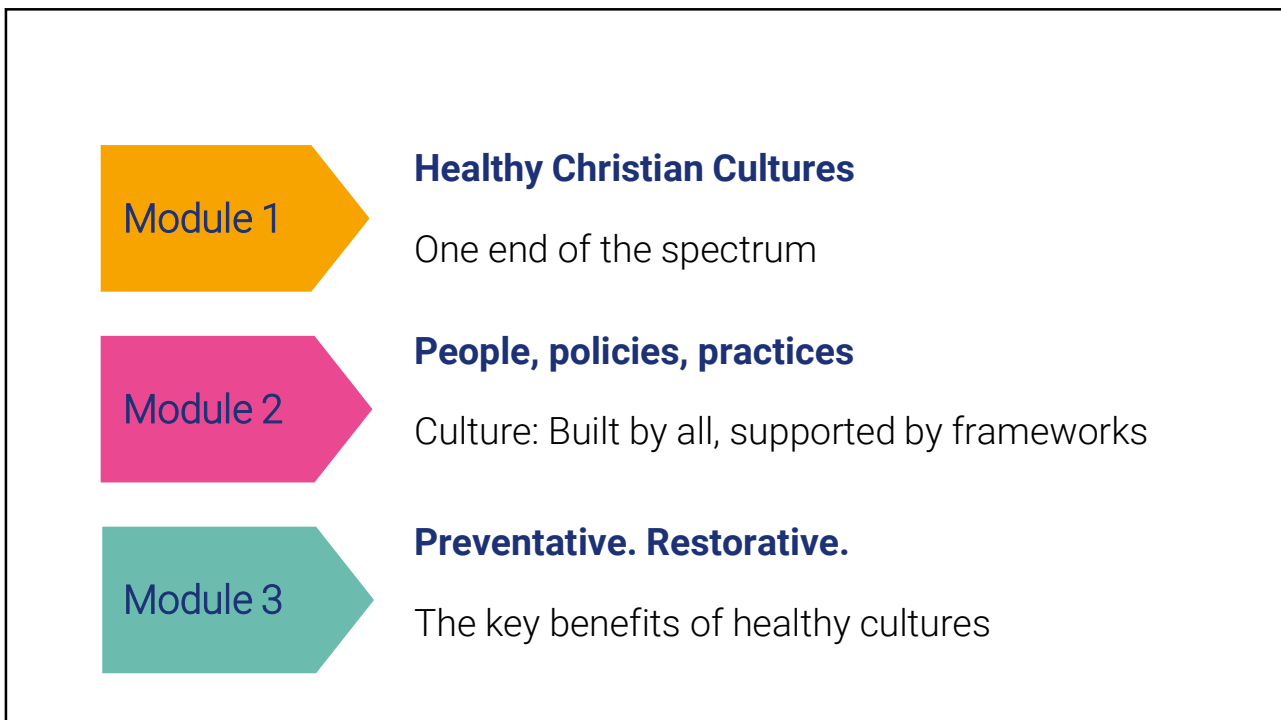


Creating safer places. Together.

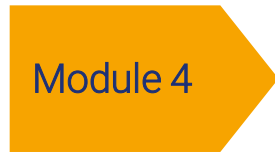
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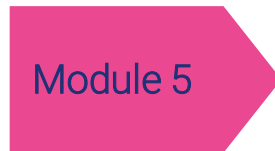


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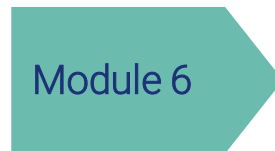
Spiritual abuse

The opposite end of the spectrum



Responding well

Appropriate responses, pathways for referral



Openness, awareness and process

Culture is never static

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Is it redeemable?






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Module 4:

Spiritual Abuse

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In this module:

-  Defining spiritual abuse
-  The perpetrators and settings
-  Key characteristics

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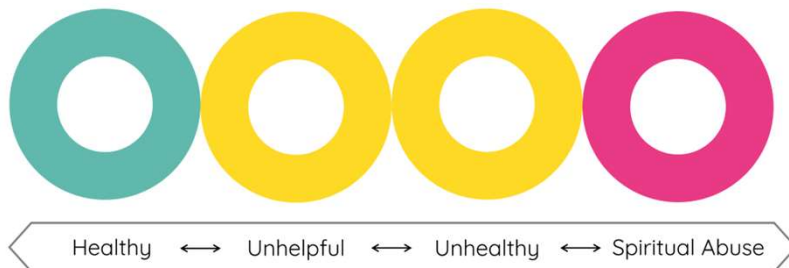
Defining spiritual abuse

- Form of emotional/psychological abuse
- Occurs in religious/faith-based contexts
- Unhealthy/harmful behaviours supported or justified by faith or holy texts (Bible)

(Oakley and Humphreys, 2019)

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Defining spiritual abuse: A spectrum of behaviour



by Lisa Oakley, Professor of Safeguarding and Knowledge Exchange at University of Chester

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The perpetrators and settings

“Jesus isn’t the problem but rather those who use his church as a staging area for abuse.”

Dr. Erik L. Strandness, Premier Unbelievable, 2022

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The perpetrators and settings

Who are the perpetrators?

When does it become harmful?

Helpline case study



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The perpetrators and settings

- Across faiths
- Across denominations
- Across positions
- In the UK

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The perpetrators and settings

Spiritual abuse at home: Intimate partner relationships

“It can be so difficult to feel torn between one’s religious beliefs and the desire to live free from abuse.”

National Domestic Violence Helpline, Website, 2022

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Survivor/victim voices

“...take[s] the place of God in their lives.”

“...church leaders are often not very protected from being abused themselves...”

Taken from: Understanding Spiritual Abuse in Christian Communities, Bournemouth University & CCPAS

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Key characteristics

- Coercion and control
- Manipulation and exploitation
- Enforced accountability
- Requirement for secrecy and silence
- Pressure to conform

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Key characteristics

“...victim-blaming, shame and honour, abuse of power by religious leaders, gender disparity, mistrust of external agencies and pressure on victims to ‘forgive’”

Taken from: IICSA, 2021

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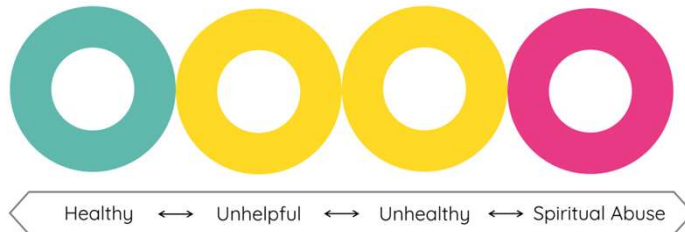
Key characteristics

"...‘accountability’ involved a hard hand.” (Uni. Of Bournemouth, 2017)

"Keep your head down, and your mouth shut.” (Uni. Of Bournemouth Uni, 2017)

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Key characteristics: Case study Financial giving



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Breakout rooms

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Any questions?





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Module 5: Responding well

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In this module:

-  Responding appropriately
-  Referral pathways

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Responding appropriately

The impact may not be visible

“This experience is the equivalent of someone **depth**
charging our insides.”

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Responding appropriately

Main impacts:



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Responding appropriately

Listen to the statements –
were responses helpful or unhelpful?



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Responding appropriately

- Safe
- Serious
- Active listening
- No minimisation or blame
- Bible and prayer
- Confidentiality
- Support & refer



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Responding appropriately

Church leaders
Thirtyone:eight
Friends and family
Church safeguarding officer
Statutory agencies
Counselling
External support



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Break



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Coffee break

5:00

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Referral pathways

“A clear policy, with precise steps on what should be done”.

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Survivor/victim voices

“...after all this time it’s not only the women’s words that are so powerful, it’s the absence of their silence.”

Taken from: The Guardian, 2021 [online]

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Referral pathways

- Statutory agencies: Children and Crime
- Charity regulators
- Umbrella organisations/denomination
- Support networks

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Breakout rooms

thirtyone:
eight 

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Any questions?



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Module 6:
Openness,
awareness and
processes

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In this module:

 Openness

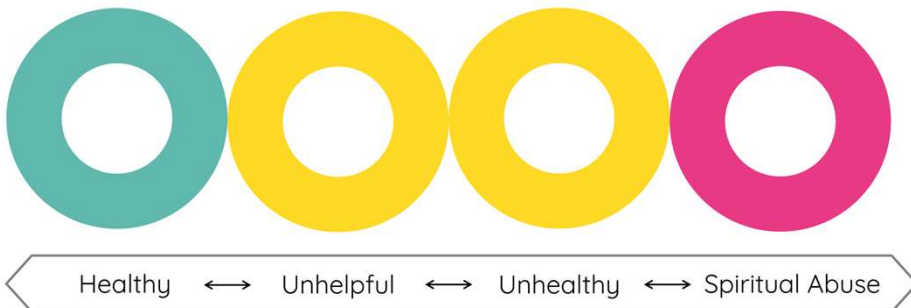
 Awareness

 Processes

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Understanding culture

A spectrum of behaviour



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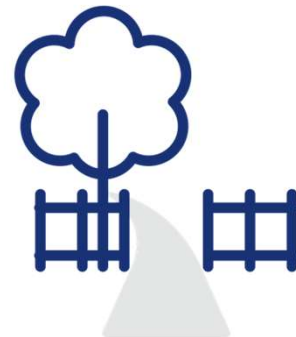
Survivor/victim voices

“...he was ‘a Christian man and Christian men don’t do that.’ ”

Taken from: IICSA Experiences Shared, online, 2022

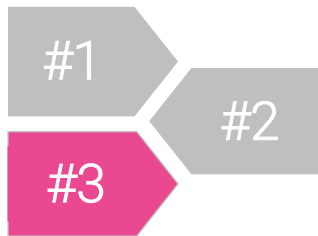

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Openness



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Poll



The slide features a light grey arrow-shaped header pointing right with the word "Poll" in blue. Below the header, on the left, is a dark blue icon of a notepad with a pencil. To the right of the notepad are three chevron-shaped boxes. The top-left chevron is grey and contains "#1". The bottom-left chevron is pink and contains "#3". The right chevron is grey and contains "#2".

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Awareness



The slide features the word "Awareness" in dark blue at the top left. Below the text are three dark blue house icons arranged horizontally from left to right, increasing in size. Each house icon has a white outline for the roofline.

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Breakout rooms



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Processes



Getting the whole organisation on board!

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Any questions?



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I have learnt.....



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**Your feedback
is important to
US.**



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thirtyone:eight

Creating safer places. Together.