



MACSAS - Your Safety

If you are a victim of sexual abuse / exploitation by a clergy / minister or religious / nun and you are subjected to violence, harassment or unpleasant behaviour by abuser, this leaflet may be of help.

Whilst these situations are quite rare no person should suffer at the hands of another in this way. There is help and advice available.

What to do if you are being threatened by alleged abuser, his friends, the church or his congregation or relatives.

There may be occasions when, because you speak out about abuse, or report officially your abuser, you may experience distressing, abusive or violent behaviour. Some of this behaviour may fall within the legal definition of assault, harassment or violent offences.

Overt physical violence

If you believe you are in danger then it is important you consider the following options:

- Contact the police to report or ask for security & safeguarding in some way.
- Contact women's violence units for advice or refuge.
- Tell a friend(s) what has happened after any incident and thereafter.
- Record precisely what happened. Describe the incident including what was said and who was present. Record also the time, location and circumstances of incident. Include who you told, if anyone.
- Seek medical / GP help if injured and for injuries to be recorded / photographed.
- Get a friend to photograph any injuries or better still a GP or Medical team should do so.
- Keep your record safe by making a copy and giving it to a trusted friend. Or keep it in a secure place.
- Move geographically if your safety is compromised. (This should only be temporary).
- Be guided by skilled personnel in violence work.

Harassment

Family, friends or congregation of the person you have accused of a sexual offence or misconduct may undertake harassment.

This can include:

- Unpleasant letters (can be anonymous).
- Unpleasant remarks.
- Calls for you to leave Church.
- Unpleasant behaviours .
- Leaving objects in your garden / on your doorstep.
- Persistent, ongoing systematic, harassment such that very frequently you are distressed or frightened.
- Threats to sue you or publish in the press details about you.

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Harassment is both civil & a criminal offence.
You have several options to try and deal with it:

- Warn the harasser that you will go to police if it does not cease (only do this if there are no threats of violence).
- Enlist the help of friends or relatives to support your challenge to the person(s) offending you.
- Record all incidences as above.
- Keep all correspondence or other items sent.
- Seek advice from organisations listed here.
- Seek the advice of police.
- Never engage in lengthy conversations with harassers.
- Use the answer-phone rather than answer calls yourself.
- It is best not to retaliate but to gain support from others.

In the event of no action being taken by the police you may need to consider moving from church or area.

Harassment by individuals not connected to your case

There are occasions when someone, not in any way part of the situation, becomes a stalker or harasser. They may have read something in the paper or somehow come to know your circumstances. This is a very rare situation. Such individuals usually have mental health difficulties.

You need to consider your options. Even if you do not know the person you have several courses of action. All of the above suggestions are applicable to this situation as well.

The police may:

- Install a cctv camera by your home
- An alarm directly to police station
- A hand held personal alarm
- Give you an emergency number to ring

You may also want to consider:

- You may consider getting a guard dog!
- Having someone stay with you
- Moving

Remember this situation is extremely rare.

Useful organisations

Refer to the Resources section of our website.

MACSAS Helpline: 0808 801 0340