



## **TOWARDS HEALING**

A Catholic Church response to Institutional/Clerical/Religious abuse

### ***Create a safe place to talk and listen***

Restorative Justice is an approach to conflict that focuses on the needs of survivors, offenders and family members. It does not concern itself with satisfying legal principles or punishing the offender. Survivors take an active role in the process, while offenders are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions. Face-to-Face meetings between the parties are normally facilitated by a trained professional.

The Towards Healing service in Ireland has developed a professional team of facilitator who are available to arrange and mediate meetings between survivors and their families with members of the Catholic Church and Religious Congregations. Restorative Justice in this context would be slightly unique in that the purest definition of restorative justice is based on victim/offender meetings.

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### ***Facilitated listening process***

As survivors telephone into Towards Healing requesting this service, an assessment to ascertain if this process would fulfil the survivor's (or family members) hopes and expectation takes place. Following the assessment of the suitability of the case for the Facilitated Listening process, the Church Leader responsible for the Congregation/Diocese would be contacted to invite them to participate in the process. This is done with the signed consent of the survivor, once this commitment has been established, the facilitator would move between the parties having individual contact, via telephone or in person, to establish an understanding of the hopes, exceptions and concerns of all the parties concerned. The facilitator would advance the process, if appropriate, to a point where a Face-to-Face meeting could be established between the parties, which might include people supportive to the survivor or Church official. A facilitator may work with both parties at a Face-to-Face meeting by focusing the process on the needs of the parties in a non-judgemental manner without allocating blame, while validating the suffering of the survivor and the responsibility of the church Leader.

Restorative Justice Initiatives can be unique depending on the particular requests of the survivor initiating the contact. The process might be concluded as a one off consultation or continue with on-going meetings between the survivor and the Church Leader with agreement by both parties.

The Restorative Justice process is confidential and separate and independent of any legal or civil process that may be undertaken by the survivor.

If you have any comments or concerns about the service please contact us on our **Freephone Helpline:**  
**1 800 303 416 (Rep of Ireland)**  
**0800 0963315 (Northern Ireland & UK).**

We are open during the following hours:

**Monday to Thursday** 11:00 am to 8pm  
(Excluding Public Holidays)

**Friday** 11:00 am to 6pm

**Please keep this sheet for your own information in case you need to refer to it again in the future.**