I'M A SURVIVOR OF CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE IN FOOTBALL. SHOULD I WAIVE MY ANONYMITY?

A guide to help you make an informed decision.

WRITTEN BASED ON THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF FORMER FOOTBALLERS, WHO'VE BEEN SUPPORTED TO PRODUCE THIS GUIDANCE BY THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION.

We hope this booklet will give you enough information and insight to enable you to make a decision. One that's right for you and those around you.

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This booklet will not answer the question above. Only you can do that. What we hope it will do is give you enough information and insight to enable you to make a decision. One that's right for you and those around you.

It's been written based on the lived experiences of former grassroots and professional footballers – particularly the powerful testimony and reflections of survivor Ian Ackley.

Some of these former players have waived their anonymity, some haven't. However, it is intended to inform anyone at any level of the game. The fact is that, despite the media reports, two-thirds of reported non-recent sexual abuse cases in football occurred in the grassroots game.

Although written for a football audience, we hope the underlying principles in this booklet are also useful to anyone faced with the 'to waive or not to waive?' question.

The overall intention is to facilitate a period of reflection, which will help lead you to a decision only you can make. And when you do come to a decision, there's no 'right' or 'wrong'. Both have their different motivations, as we intend to show. If you have already waived your anonymity, we hope this booklet will prepare you for potential issues you may need to navigate going forward.

Wherever you are on your journey, we wish you well.

General note:

We hope this guide will be useful whatever your present circumstances. You could be right at the point of deciding whether or not to waive your anonymity – or you might want to read it for future reference.

It is written for adults, as children under 16 cannot choose to waive their anonymity – nor can a parent/carer on their behalf. Legally, under-16s MUST remain anonymous unless there is exceptional public interest to override the paramount interests of the child.

Of course, being young doesn't stop at age 16. Legally, (The Children's Act 1989), a child is anyone up to their 18th birthday. However, for some situations – such as waiving anonymity – there is a lower minimum legal age, such as 16.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and best practice recognises that 16/17-year-olds are still developing and require additional protection. Anyone working with or supporting young people of this age should try to ensure they are not brought under undue pressure to waive their anonymity.

Equally, all young people, including those who have reached their 18th birthday, may require additional support to fully understand the consequences of their decision.



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KICKING-OFF WITH SOME TERMINOLOGY

There are so many words used around the subject of non-recent child sexual abuse and the landscape can get very confusing. So here are some definitions of key words used in this booklet:

Survivor:

Throughout this booklet, the term 'survivor' is used to describe individuals who have experienced child sexual abuse in the past, but the abuse is not current and ongoing. 'Survivor' is intended to cover terms such as 'victim' and 'those with lived experience'.

Disclosure:

A survivor telling any other person about the abuse for the first time. That person could be a partner, relative or friend. It could equally be a counsellor, therapist, teacher, doctor, a sports governing body like The FA – or the police. It could also be another survivor.

But because someone has disclosed, it **does not mean they have waived their anonymity.** That's different.

Anonymity:

Put simply, it's when a person wants to remain unknown. In cases of non-recent child sexual abuse, it is a legal right to remain anonymous (Sexual Offences Act (2003). It can only be waived by giving express consent, **in writing.** Verbal consent is not enough.

The most likely source of the question about whether you will waive your anonymity is, understandably, the media. Best practice is that the media should ask you **every time they speak to you** whether you wish to waive your anonymity or not. If you do, you should express this **in writing** every time. Having waived it, any media outlet should ask you to complete and sign a formal Consent Form. You should also ensure you get a copy.

However, some media outlets may not follow best practice. If you have waived anonymity with one outlet, the information is in the public domain and another publication can use it without your consent. Some media outlets are not members of the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO), though they are still bound by the law. Bloggers, who are highly unlikely to be IPSO members, may also publish via social media.

You are **guaranteed anonymity until the point you waive it.** But once you do waive it, you cannot retract it. This is why it's such an important decision.

What anonymity should guarantee:

A person who has not waived their anonymity in the context of non-recent child sexual abuse **must** remain unnamed to the general public. Understandably, this restriction usually applies to the media, but it applies to individuals too. If

an individual publishes a name on social media, that is also putting the name in the public domain.

Equally, even if a media outlet or individual does not name the person, but gives enough information (verbally or visually) for the person to be identified by others, this also contravenes the Sexual Offences Act (2003). Prosecution for contravening the Act can – and does – follow. Respecting anonymity is also a core pillar of the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO).

The Editors' Code, which IPSO enforces, says that "journalists must not identify or publish material likely to the lead to the identification of a victim of sexual assault" without their consent. IPSO has produced guidance for survivors of sexual assault, which can be viewed by clicking **here.**



"Survivors talking openly about their experiences in the media can be extremely powerful, enabling broader public understanding of these issues and encouraging others to seek support. At the same time, choosing to waive anonymity is a serious decision that can have long-term effects on survivors and their families and friends.

"We welcome this guidance, which should help survivors think through some of the important considerations and find further sources of support."

IPSO (Independent Press Standards Organisation)

WHAT'S BROUGHT YOU HERE?

There are many reasons, but here are some of the common ones:

1. **You've read others' experiences, which echo some your own, and you're thinking about coming forward.**

2. **You've been identified by a media outlet in connection with a case and a journalist has approached you for your story.**

3. **You've disclosed to someone in the past, and now they are urging you to speak out.**

4. **You've been named on a social media platform – or appeared in a picture that's been posted.**

5. **You've been brought into the public domain without your permission (e.g. as in the example above).**

6. **You've been approached by the Police as they are investigating a case and a former teammate has named you as someone who might have witnessed or experienced abuse.**

In none of these situations are you under any pressure – nor should you be put under any – to waive your anonymity.

As we've noted, the most common approach to waive your anonymity will come from the media. In this connection, IPSO's guidance for journalists on reporting on sexual offences clearly states: "If someone agrees to be identified, you **must have their consent in writing.** You should not pressurise someone to give their consent."

It goes on to say: "It is good practice to check that someone still consents to be named if the consent was given some time prior to publication." You can see more of this guidance to journalists by clicking **here**.

Of course, there can be a big difference between good practice and reality. But it's good to know what others have been told.

The only piece of definitive advice we give in this booklet is at the point where you're asked the question – sometimes repeatedly: "Are you willing to be identified/waive your anonymity?"

Our advice is STOP. Think about it. Talk to a person/people with whom you feel safe. And now you're here, read this booklet to help inform your decision. Only then answer the question.



"When I first considered waiving my anonymity, I discussed this at length with my partner and children and felt confident that we had considered all the implications of doing so. I was contemplating how and when I would do this when I was fortunate enough to spend some time with somebody who had waived their anonymity some years before. This was a real eye opener as it made me realise that there were many possible outcomes that we had not anticipated. I eventually waived my anonymity but would advise anybody contemplating doing likewise to seek as much information as possible before taking this important step."

Colin Harris

TO WHOM SHOULD YOU TALK?

Our answer to this question is to ask yourself another question: "Is there somebody with whom I feel really safe?" Someone you know you can trust, confide in and who will give you the space, time and attention span to listen – really listen – to you.

Someone in particular may immediately come to mind. Alternatively, lots of people may pop up. To help decide the most appropriate people, the chart below should help you. Just place people in their closest proximity to you, and some definite thoughts will soon emerge.

Of course, no-one may come to mind. If so, then why not seek contact with a survivor-support organisation to gain their confidential thoughts and possible advice? There's a list of these organisations under 'SOURCES OF SUPPORT', starting on page 22.

Be aware, some of your trusted people will have strong opinions, precisely because they are close to you and care about you. That's why talking to a survivor-support organisation – and potentially through them another survivor – can be a good option, as they can be more objective. But always remember – it's YOUR decision.

Similarly, people in your trusted network may have no experience of media engagement. On Road's 'Angles' project is a good source of information for anyone who's thinking about engaging in media work and wants more resources to inform their decision. Click **here** for more information on the project.

MY 'TRUSTED PEOPLE' NETWORK

Your network of family, friends, professional advisers – or potentially a fellow survivor – via one of the organisations listed on pages 22, 23 and 24.



TO WAIVE OR NOT TO WAIVE – WHAT ARE THE CONSIDERATIONS?

There's an important point to make before we explore the answer to the above question:

You may never be asked whether you want to waive your anonymity or not. Don't assume it's inevitable, as much will depend on the context in which you come forward.

For example, when it comes to the media, there simply may be no media interest in your case.

This could be for a number of reasons, the abuse may have been a long time ago and/or the perpetrator could be dead. We all know the media are often more interested in those who were or are in the public eye. Your experience may not have involved 'famous' people or organisations – either you as an individual, the perpetrator or the football organisation they represented (e.g. a club). You have to be honest with yourself here. If your experience falls outside these scenarios, don't be surprised if you attract little, or no media interest.

But if you are asked whether you want to waive your anonymity, or you're sure the question will come, it will really help to organise your thinking around two key areas:

1. **ASSESS YOUR MOTIVES: why do you think you want to waive/not waive your anonymity?**

2. **ASSESS THE EFFECTS: whether you waive or not, what will the effect be on you, those around you and on your working life?**

We cannot emphasise enough how much good-quality thinking helps. In addition, writing things down can help you see things more clearly – and means you can return to your written-down thoughts, instead of constantly ruminating.

Of course, you will already have had valid reasons for coming forward in the first place, such as:

- I want to make a difference and help create a safer future;
- I want to bring the perpetrator to account;
- I want to re-take control of my life and have some closure;
- I don't want anything like this to happen to my children, or any other child;
- Because I'm angry.

These, and any other reasons for coming forward, are just as valid whether you waive your anonymity or not. The decision to then waive/not waive your anonymity is something different.



"There are no right or wrong answers when it comes to choosing whether or not you decide to waive your anonymity. It is a totally personal decision and very much depends on your own personal circumstances. Often there may be people encouraging you to 'speak out' but I urge you to listen to yourself and not be persuaded by others. If you do decide to 'go public' then you should be sure you are ready and have considered all the possible ramifications."

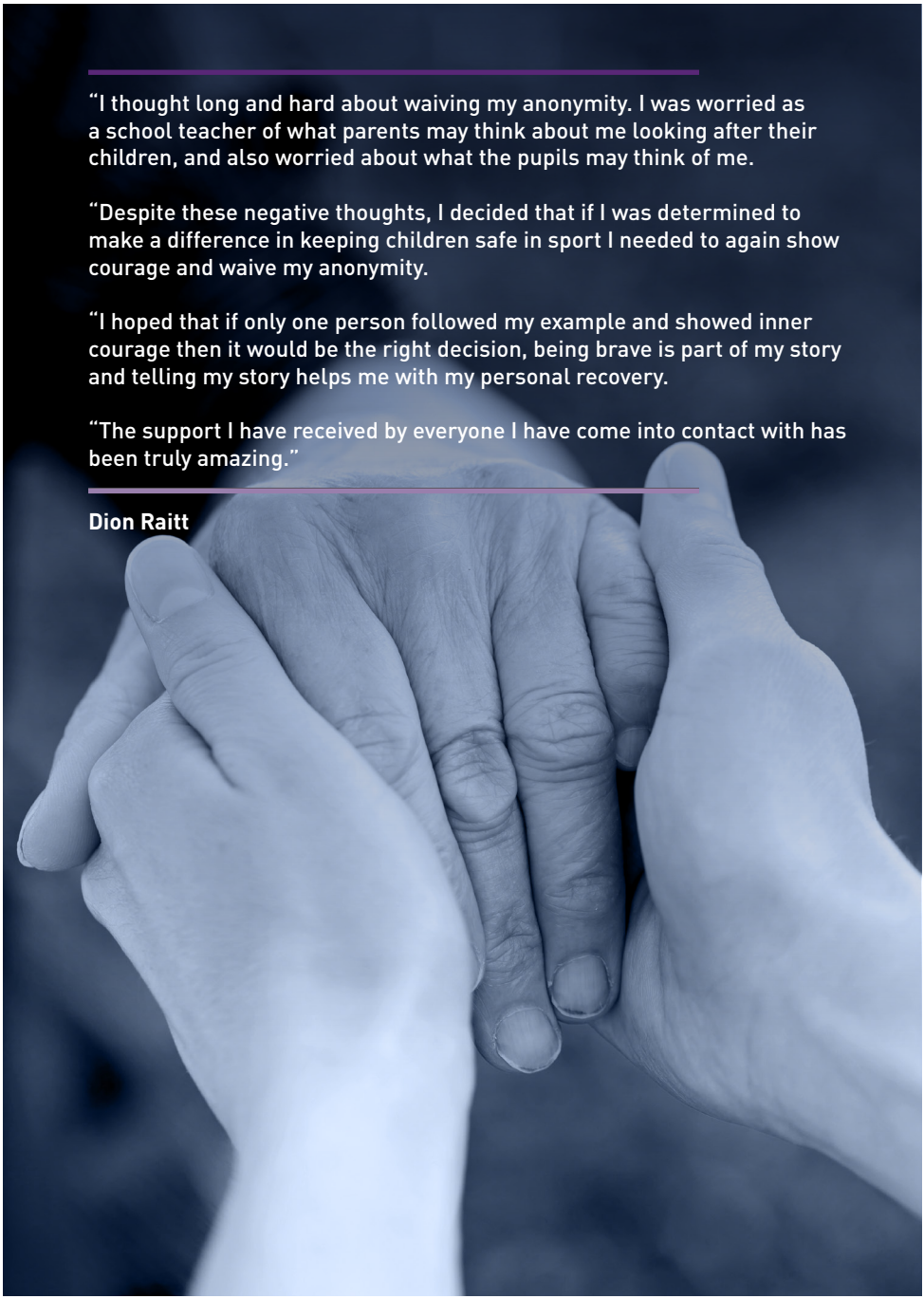
Ian Ackley

ASSESS YOUR MOTIVES

Here are some common reasons why people choose to waive or not. It's by no means an exhaustive list. As we said at the start of this booklet, none are 'right' or 'wrong' – it's all about the way you feel.

You have to be completely honest with yourself. Maybe tick the reasons that resonate with you – and come back later and reflect on them. Or write down other reason(s) in the final rows.

Yes, I think I want to waive my anonymity because:	This applies to me	No, I think I want to retain my anonymity because:	This applies to me
I want my name to be known, as I think it will encourage others to speak out.		I'm not ready to be named, and don't understand the consequences.	
I want personal recognition/ acknowledgement of what I've been through.		I feel it will protect those around me – as well as myself.	
Because I'm quite well known, I feel naming me will inspire others and create a wider support network.		I don't want to lose control of what's said (e.g. on social media).	
I think naming me will make it 'real'.		I'm involved in other cases and don't want to prejudice them.	
There may be other survivors/ victims who thought they were the only one.		I want to protect my children from knowing what I experienced	
I want the media attention.		I'm from a small or close-knit community and I am concerned about being ostracised, or how waiving my anonymity may affect me in my environment. I'm not sure I'm ready for this	
Because of cultural / religious or faith-based considerations		Because of cultural / religious or faith-based considerations	
Other reasons...		Other reasons...	



"I thought long and hard about waiving my anonymity. I was worried as a school teacher of what parents may think about me looking after their children, and also worried about what the pupils may think of me.

"Despite these negative thoughts, I decided that if I was determined to make a difference in keeping children safe in sport I needed to again show courage and waive my anonymity.

"I hoped that if only one person followed my example and showed inner courage then it would be the right decision, being brave is part of my story and telling my story helps me with my personal recovery.

"The support I have received by everyone I have come into contact with has been truly amazing."

Dion Raitt

ASSESS THE EFFECTS

We think the other key factor in your decision-making process is to explore the potential effects of waiving your anonymity – irrespective of your above responses.

You may have already disclosed to those around you, but if not, you may want to do this separately before you talk about waiving anonymity or not, and its consequences.

That's because people – particularly those very close to you – may need time to come to terms with something you've kept secret from them for sometimes years. You may need to work through this with such people before tackling the subject of anonymity.

But when you do get to the point where you feel you need to make a decision on waiving your anonymity or not, please consider the thoughts below. The bullet points are not an exhaustive list – they are simply intended to be thought-provoking and are based on lived experience.

The effect on...YOU

Ask yourself these questions, and any others which arise on the way:

- Are you confident you can deal with possible intrusion and scrutiny on your private life?
- Do you understand the legal framework when dealing with the media?
- Are you confident about talking to the media, whether in print, on radio or TV?
- Are you prepared to revisit your experience – and potentially do so many times over with different people?
- Are you prepared for the possibility that people you don't know may point you out and spread mistruths?
- Do you feel that speaking out and reclaiming your 'voice', could empower you and possibly others?
- Is now the right time? Perhaps it will be better when your children (if you have them) are a bit older?
- More positively, do you welcome the opportunity to talk about your lived experience?

"Waiving my anonymity has given me the strength to speak to others who have suffered as I did, and to let them know they have a voice and someone to talk to on the bad days."

Alan Arber

The effect on...THOSE AROUND YOU

Remember, your family and friends may also be asked questions about your experience, often when you're not there. The questions below are ones to ask openly when you discuss with them whether to waive your anonymity or not:

Your partner:

- Like you, are they ready for the potential intrusion and scrutiny?
- Could it adversely affect their social circle and working relationships?
- Like you, do they understand the legal framework when dealing with the media?
- What's your partner's view about speaking to the children, if you have them, and to your respective parents?
- Again – on a more positive note – do they welcome the opportunity to talk openly?

Of course, you may not have a partner right now. If so, it's worth thinking about the above if you have a partner in the future.

Your children, if you have them:

Much will depend on the age of your children. Is now the right time? Perhaps it will be better when your children (if you have them) are a bit older? However, if you feel they are old enough to discuss how 'going public' will affect them, it's only fair to get their opinion.

In particular, will your name being in the public domain adversely affect:

- Their school life and friendships;
- The attitude of the school itself towards them (perhaps leading to a discussion with teachers);
- Your or your partner's relationship with the school and other parents/ carers?
- Are they able to cope with potential media questions?

Again, if you don't have children now, but hope to in the future, try and give some thought to what it would be like if/when you do have children.

"After watching four brave men speak candidly on national television in November 2016, I found myself contemplating. Do I unearth and unravel a heap of painful memories to add to my present unaddressed trauma? After a few days of deliberation, I embarked on the journey of disclosing. The day of my 'Achieving Best Evidence' (ABE) interview with the police I decided to remain anonymous – throughout the criminal investigation and any possible civil claim. My parents, siblings and children were unaware of the abuses I endured as a minor and I felt that my disclosing had already taken its toll on me.

"The thought of my family being affected by any potential publicity was one of the most important factors. Fortunately witnesses came forward regardless of me not waiving my right to anonymity. Looking back, I wouldn't have chosen a different path."

Anonymous

Your parents:

In many cases, if they are still alive, your parents may now be in their later years. They will probably have been through a range of emotions if you have already disclosed to them, including anger and possibly guilt that this happened without them knowing – and/or that they should have prevented it.

Waiving/not waiving your anonymity will release other emotions, such as:

- Social stigmas can still be very much alive in older generations, so could your disclosure alienate them from friends and others in smaller communities?
- Are they ready for potential questions, whoever's asking them (i.e. other family members, neighbours, friends, the media)?
- If you have already disclosed to them, perhaps they do want you to waive your anonymity, so they can be more open if asked questions?

As a local lad, the media interest was intense, I could not go out or watch my son play football without someone asking me what I knew. My parents are well known in the community as well and I felt I need to protect them. All this contributed to my decision not to waive my anonymity."

Anonymous

The effect on...YOUR WORKING LIFE, if you are employed

Your work colleagues may be part of your social network. Some may be really close friends. But it's really difficult to judge what people's reaction will be when they see your name in the public domain connected to a case of child sexual abuse.

So it's good to reflect on:

- If you do waive your anonymity, do you feel your work environment and colleagues will be sympathetic?
- Or will it create an uncomfortable setting, where you may feel you want to leave?
- Alternatively, if you don't waive your anonymity, will you feel you're sitting on another 'secret' that creates a barrier with work colleagues?
- If you have a public image in your career (whether in professional football or not), will it change if you become better known for the abuse you suffered?
- Will it relieve a pressure valve at work if you do waive your anonymity, so you can talk more openly?

These are important questions as this will be a stressful time for you, and you still need to earn a salary to pay bills and preserve your way of life.

> "In my professional environment it is key to keep asking questions until I can demonstrate understanding and suitability as not all clients require the same services to meet their needs. I had to keep asking questions of what support was available and try different services until I found 'a good place'."
>
> **Anonymous**

The questions in the sections above may appear to steer you down the route of retaining your anonymity. This is not the intention. They are purely to get you thinking so you're making the decision with a good, all-round understanding of what could happen.

Those quoted in this publication as having waived their anonymity, have perceived this to be a positive experience.

Organisations like On Road Media (see 'SOURCES OF SUPPORT', starting on page 22) work with survivors who would like to be involved in media conversations, whether they have waived their anonymity or not. On Road Media's 'Angles' project supports survivors and practitioners to engage and work with the media, as well as helping them develop the required skills and confidence through bespoke training, mentoring and peer support,

without any pressure to be identifiable. On Road Media has also produced the guidance 'Better Stories: How to support people with first-hand experience to do great media interviews.'

If you are contemplating getting involved in media work, you may wish to visit their website, or call them to ask how they might support.

"Waiving your anonymity after disclosure is very much a personal choice, and one I believe you should be prepared for. Family and friends can find it difficult to understand as it's a lot to come to terms with and, once it's public, it's out!

"My advice is that you do it only for the right reason and that reason is you! As this guidance shares, ask yourself the important questions: Will it help you? Will it allow you closure? Will it help you move forward? Are you happy with everyone knowing? Will people close to you support this decision?

"From my perspective, I am glad I waived my anonymity, as I know it can and has helped encourage other survivors to report their abuse."

David Lean

Finally, if there has been media interest, there comes a time when it fades away...

If you have decided to waive your anonymity, and if yours is a high-profile case, you may have received a lot of media attention. This requires a lot of emotional energy – the volume of which you probably won't realise at the time.

But there will be a time when journalists put away their notebooks, the microphones and cameras are packed away and there are no more talk shows inviting you to contribute.

You may have a huge sense of relief at this point, but equally some survivors can feel extremely isolated and vulnerable, when something that has felt really purposeful is no longer there. The same may apply to those closest to you.

If this happens to you, make sure you talk openly about these feelings to those closest to you. Or call one of the support organisations listed in 'SOURCES OF SUPPORT', starting on page 22. Talking through how you feel can really help you through this transitionary period.



"If you do waive your anonymity and you invest your emotional energy in that area then there will be a time that at the satellite dishes will be taken down and the notebooks will be put away. There may be no more attention and you may feel like you have a God-sized hole to fill. It's at this point you may become extremely vulnerable and isolated."

Ian Ackley

SOME OTHER QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE

Q: How long does anonymity remain in place?

A: Anonymity remains in place for the lifetime of the survivor, even if the allegation is withdrawn, the police decide to take no action, or the accused is acquitted. There are some exceptions, but they are very limited and specific.

Q: If I'm being interviewed by a journalist on a wider subject (e.g. my football career) and during the interview I disclose that I was sexually abused, does the journalist still need my consent in writing to waive my anonymity in relation to my experience?

A: Yes. Journalists must still seek your written consent to publish anything related to your experience if they plan to name you. As on page .., best practice is that media should ask you every time they speak to you whether you wish to waive your anonymity or not. They should also ask you to complete a Consent Form.

Q: Does 'the media' include 'social media' such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram?

A: Absolutely – if you choose not to waive your anonymity, you cannot be named or pictured (either explicitly or by implication) in/on any medium that's in the public domain – i.e. where other people have access to it. So don't think it's restricted to the written press, radio or TV – your anonymity, if you choose to preserve it, should remain intact everywhere.

"I did waive my anonymity after fully digesting, understanding and canvassing opinion on the subject. Looking back, it unburdened me, freed my mind. I felt I was not carrying the secret anymore, as it had become very tiring to shoulder the 'baggage'. It helped me tackle the guilt, shame, embarrassment and anxiety faced for decades of inner trauma and hurt.

"I found my voice, as well as help and support. Most, if not all, persons I encountered, including total strangers, have been, and continue to be very supportive and understanding.

"It also gives you the strength and confidence to help shape the future on this abhorrent crime."

Gary Cliffe

SOURCES OF SUPPORT

Here's a list of organisations you may find useful, listed alphabetically. We've given a very brief description of the services each one offers, but please visit their websites to find out more.

Organisations working across society

Organisation	Website	Contact	Services offered
IPSO (Independent Press Standards Organisation)	inquiries@ipso.co.uk	0300 123 22 20 (9:00am to 5:00pm)	Regulator of most newspapers and magazines, has a 24-hour helpline for people worried about potential press intrusion and can take complaints about coverage under the Editors' Code.
NAPAC	https://napac.org.uk/	0808 801 0331	Supports adult survivors of all forms of childhood abuse, provides training for those working with survivors, and uses research to help survivor voice shape change.
NSPCC	www.nspcc.org.uk/	0808 800 5000	Wide-ranging services aimed at tackling every form of child abuse.
Marie Collins Foundation	www mariecollins foundation.org.uk/	01609 751631	Providing support and resources for people recovering from technology assisted child sexual abuse.
Rape Crisis	www.rapecrisis.org.uk/	24/7 Support line: 0800 500 2222 Online chat: via 247sexualabuse support.org.uk	The 24/7 Support Line is a free phone and confidential online chat service for anyone aged 16 and over in England and Wales who has been affected by any kind of sexual violence, abuse or harassment.

SOURCES OF SUPPORT (continued)

Organisation	Website	Contact	Services offered
Safeline	www.safeline.org.uk/	Main contact: 01926 402 498 National male survivor helpline: 0808 800 5005	Free, trauma-informed support for anyone impacted by sexual abuse. National male survivor helpline/online support telephone and online counselling service for child sexual abuse victims age 16+. We also support non-abusing supporters.
SurvivorsUK	wwwsurvivorsuk.org	020 3598 3898 National helpline: 0786 0003 1252 Webchat via website	Supports men and boys, trans and non-binary survivors of sexual abuse. Providing case work, counselling groupwork and Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) services based in London and a national online helpline.



SOURCES OF SUPPORT (continued)

Organisations working specifically in football (listed alphabetically)

Organisation	Website	Contact	Services offered
Sporting Chance	www.sportingchanceclinic.com	07500 000777	Sporting Chance provides access to talking therapy through a national network of practitioners who are qualified and experienced to help those who have experienced non-recent abuse within a football setting.
Survivor Support and Advocacy Service (SSA)	www.thepfa.com/	**07940 324285** SupportAdvocate@thepfa.com	Delivered by the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) and jointly funded by The FA. This service is available to anyone in football, not just former or current professional players. I.e. it's available across the men's and women's games to club officials, volunteers, players, referees, etc. The service is a trauma-informed, person-centric service which means the survivor is the decision maker.
The FA	www.TheFA.com/safeguarding	safeguarding@TheFA.com	Information on safeguarding in football, and if you wish to speak with someone about the abuse you experienced in football.



IN CONCLUSION

As we have tried to emphasise, there is no right or wrong answer to the question: 'Do you wish to waive your anonymity?'.

There's only one answer. The one that's right for you – and those around you who may be affected.

All we sincerely advise is that you think through your decision, because of the consequences it will have.

We hope this booklet will have helped that thought process, given that it's based on the experiences of former players who have already faced the question. We also want to assure you that support is available from within football – support to which you have a right.

Regardless of the decision you come to, we wish you all the best.

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