

Bishop Peter Hancock statement at Peter Ball review press conference

The first thing I want to say at the start of this Press Conference is that I am truly sorry that as a Church we failed the survivors of the abuse perpetrated by Bishop Peter Ball. Having read the report I am appalled and deeply disturbed by its contents. As Dame Moira says in her foreword, Peter Ball abused boys and men over a 20 year period and as a Church we colluded, we failed to act and protect those who came forward for help. There are no excuses.

The Church of England commissioned this review so we could learn from it and this detailed account of what went on provides a clear picture both of Peter Ball's abusive actions and our woeful response.

Whilst this is about moving forward - making the Church a safer place for all in 2017 and beyond - nevertheless we have taken very seriously the comments and criticisms in the report of some senior church figures and where appropriate have taken further action. Relating to this it was very disappointing to hear about a leak of a private letter this morning from the Archbishop to Lord Carey, when the focus should be on the survivors.

As the Lead Bishop for Safeguarding I am hugely conscious of the importance of the first recommendation that our bishops must take steps to demonstrate our individual and collective accountability for the safety and protection of all within the church.

In his statement the Archbishop of Canterbury makes it very clear that he is taking a lead on this, as Dame Moira recommends, working with me and the National Safeguarding Team. Every bishop has therefore been sent the report this morning and it is now online for everyone to read.

We will also be writing to all survivors offering them a meeting with a senior bishop, if that is something they would welcome in order that they might share their own experience. This will include the family of Neil Todd, who sadly took his own life before Peter Ball was brought to justice.

Dame Moira highlights our complex structures as being a barrier to change, while acknowledging we have a genuine commitment to change and to meet our responsibilities to the victims of abuse. This is something we continue to work on and since the creation of the National Safeguarding Team in 2015 we now have a range of new resources, policies and training modules. These are underpinned by new legislation which requires clergy and other church officers to have due regard to the House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding. This is an important development and since the 1 October 2016, a member of clergy or a church officer can be disciplined for disregarding such guidance.

Today is a reminder of how we have failed and this Report provides robust recommendations for how we can improve our safeguarding practice. Dame Moira calls the House of Bishops to reaffirm and take steps to demonstrate individual and collective accountability. We must all take responsibility for safeguarding – for safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and promoting wellbeing is at the heart of the Gospel message. In receiving this Report the Archbishop has already accepted its recommendations and we will be taking specific action to address them. This includes strengthening guidance; reviewing the Archbishops' Lists and the effectiveness of our disciplinary measures with regards to safeguarding related cases; focusing on getting the right support in place for survivors and working with all parts of the Church, including Religious Communities.

For the survivors, it may feel this is all too late. I am personally aware from my meetings with individual survivors in the course of my work that they live with the effects of this abuse for their whole life. I once again offer them my wholehearted apology.

This Report affirms the direction and steps that we have taken to improve the consistency, robustness and rigour of our practice, but progress has been too slow. It has taken longer than it

should have done, but we are absolutely committed to implementing Dame Moira's recommendations and my role as lead bishop is to ensure this happens.