

Statement from Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu and Bishop of Chester. Dr Peter Forster.

"We can confirm that we have supported the police on an investigation into allegations of sexual offences against children and adults by the late Bishop Hubert Victor Whitsey. The allegations date from 1974 onwards when he was Bishop of Chester and from 1981 while he was retired and living in Blackburn diocese. Bishop Whitsey died in 1987.

"We are deeply sorry and apologise to those individuals who have come forward to share their account of abuse by a bishop in the Church of England who was in a position of power and authority. We appreciate that it is very difficult for individuals to come forward and to give their account. Sexual abuse is a heinous crime - and is an absolute and shameful breach of trust. We acknowledge that for survivors, the effects of sexual abuse are lifelong. We are offering pastoral support to all those who have come forward and continue to hold them all in our prayers.

"We have supported the police investigation Operation Coverage, which has been comprehensive, and they have informed us that "should Right Reverend Hubert Victor Whitsey have been alive today, then the Police would have spoken to him in relation to 10 of the witness allegations.

"Anyone affected by today's news should call the CCPAS helpline on 0303 003 11 11 who can offer help and signpost to church-related support and information or alternatively call the NSPCC 0808 800 5000. Anyone with further information on the case should go direct to the police on 101.

"The Church will consider what lessons can be learnt from this case and whether any action needs to be taken as a result of what these enquiries have shown."

Police statement.

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