

The first day of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) hearing into the Anglican Church in England and Wales - looking at the diocese of Chichester as a case study - heard opening statements from representatives of all the core participants.

The full transcript of the statement from Nigel Giffin QC, representing the Archbishops' Council, will be available soon.

In his opening remarks he said: "In recent years it has become clear that the sexual abuse of children is all too common, both in our society at large, and in many organisations and institutions where the opportunity for such abuse arises.

"The Church of England is not immune to such vile practices. Nor is it by any means unique in having to confront them within its own walls.

"You may think, however, and my client would agree, that there is something even more than usually shocking about the sexual abuse of a child by a priest in holy orders, or by some other person in a position of trust and authority within the Church.

"So too if the Church permits such abuse to be denied, or survivors to be disbelieved, without proper investigation; or if incidents of abuse are brushed under the carpet, or treated as something of scant importance; or if greater attention is paid to the needs and feelings of abusers, than to those whom they have abused.

"This is an Inquiry fundamentally about the protection of children. Their safety and wellbeing must be of paramount concern to all institutions, and the Church is no exception to that."

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