

The independent report into the Church's handling of its 2007-9 Past Cases Review, PCR, has been published today. The PCR was undertaken by the Church of England in 2007-09 following evidence that the Church had failed to act appropriately in cases of child sexual abuse by clergy and church officers. More than 40,000 clergy files dating back over 30 years were reviewed across the then 44 dioceses.

In November 2015, in his report to the Archbishops' Council, the newly appointed National Safeguarding Adviser noted 'growing recognition of shortcomings of PCR'; inconsistencies in the application of the House of Bishops Protocol designed to bring consistency and independence to the process, cases of abuse coming to light that should have been identified in the PCR and survivors not being engaged in the process.

Following an initial screening process by the National Safeguarding Team, Sir Roger Singleton was asked to independently review the adequacy of the Past Cases Review and makes recommendations to the Church of England.

The report sets out the findings of this independent scrutiny and makes nine recommendations. These have been accepted by both the Archbishops' Council and House of Bishops, and action is now being taken to address both the shortcomings of the original PCR and to instigate a further review known cases and new appointments made since 2007.

Today's report will be sent to the Independent Inquiry for Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) to which Sir Roger Singleton gave evidence during the Chichester Case Study public hearing in March of this year.

Sir Roger Singleton\*, who authored the report and chaired the independent scrutiny team, said: "While we found no evidence of a planned and deliberate attempt to conceal information, there were shortcomings in the Church's public statement, which failed to reflect the true extent of the concerns which needed to be addressed. Victims and survivors were not involved, and there were gaps in relevant files and records. The Church has improved its practices in the past 10 years and I hope that the lessons learnt will mean that it can move onto important preventative work in the area of safeguarding, which is vital for all institutions."

Bishop Peter Hancock, the Church of England's lead safeguarding bishop said: "At our first IICSA hearing in March Sir Roger Singleton, who was commissioned to independently review the adequacy of the 2007-9 Past Cases Review, spoke in detail and on public record about 'stringent criticisms' of the Church's handling of it. These criticisms have been taken very seriously and acted upon and the House of Bishops have offered full support to implementing the recommendations in the report and any subsequent actions. We are committed to making sure that any known individuals who have not been dealt with appropriately in the past are assessed and any current potential risks to children and others are rigorously managed, including by reporting these individuals to the statutory authorities for investigation."

*\*Sir Roger Singleton is a former Chief Executive of Barnardo's and chaired the Independent Safeguarding Authority from 2007-2012.*

