

The Bishop of Chichester, Dr Martin Warner, has issued the following statement following an article published in the Brighton Argus Newspaper.

The feature article contains an interview with the survivor of abuse at the centre of the story about former Bishop of Chichester, George Bell.

Dr Warner said: "It is testimony to her courage and integrity that the survivor who brought the allegations against George Bell has been prompted to speak out. My hope is that the telling of her story will contribute to her sense of being heard by those within and beyond the Church who are willing to listen with an open mind and respond with compassion and clarity.

"The presence of strident voices in the public arena which have sought to undermine the survivor's claims has added in this case to the suffering of the survivor and her family. To that extent it is not surprising that she felt it necessary to take the courageous decision to speak out in public and reveal the personal details which the Church could not.

"Words of apology written in a letter can never be enough to express the Church's shame or our recognition of damage done. However, the apology that I made on behalf of the Diocese of Chichester is genuine and a sincere expression that lessons are being learnt about how we respond to accusations of abuse.

"In some responses to the George Bell case, and to the original statements from the Church nationally and locally in the diocese of Chichester, we have witnessed shocking ignorance of the suffering felt at many different levels by victims of abuse."

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