

"It is a matter of deep shame and regret that a Bishop in the Church of England has today been sentenced for a series of offences over 15 years against 18 young men known to him. There are no excuses whatsoever for what took place and the systematic abuse of trust perpetrated by Peter Ball over decades.

We apologise unreservedly to those survivors of Peter Ball's abuse and pay tribute to their bravery in coming forward and also the long wait for justice that they have endured. We note that there are those whose cases remain on file for whom today will be a difficult day, not least in the light of the courage and persistence that they have demonstrated in pressing for the truth to be revealed. We also remember Neil Todd, whose bravery in 1992 enabled others to come forward but who took his own life before Peter Ball's conviction or sentencing.

As the Police have noted Peter Ball systematically abused the trust of the victims, many of whom who were aspiring priests, whilst others were simply seeking to explore their spirituality. He also abused the trust placed in him by the Church and others, maintaining a campaign of innocence for decades until his final guilty plea only weeks ago. Since that plea was made processes in the Church have begun to initiate formal internal disciplinary procedures against Peter Ball.

Operation Dunhill began as a direct result of the safeguarding officer at Lambeth Palace raising concerns about Peter Ball following a church initiated review of files. The approach to the police was a proactive step on the part of the national Church leading to a self-initiated referral via CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection centre) to Sussex Police in 2012. This led to active co-working between Lambeth Palace, the Diocese of Chichester and Sussex Police on a complex enquiry with full information sharing. We pay tribute to those detectives whose work on this case over the past three years has led to this conviction and sentencing.

Since Peter Ball's guilty plea on 8th of September this year questions have been raised about the Church's handling of this case. As a result the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, has commissioned an independent review of the way the Church responded.

The independent review will examine the Church of England's cooperation with the police and other statutory agencies and the extent to which it shared information in a timely manner. It will also assess the extent to which the Church both properly assessed the possible risk that Bishop Ball might pose to others and responded adequately to concerns and representations submitted by survivors.

Further information about the arrangements for the review will be available in due course. The Archbishop has confirmed that the report of the review will include a detailed account of how the case was handled within the church and will be published.

The Church of England always takes any allegations of abuse very seriously and is committed to being a safe place for all. To this end we have robust procedures and policies in place. But we can never be complacent. Any survivors or those with information about church-related abuse must always feel free to come forward with confidence that safeguarding procedures will be followed.

Should anyone have further information or need to discuss the personal impact of this news the Church has worked with the NSPCC to set up a confidential helpline no. 0800 389 5344."

Paul Butler, lead Bishop on safeguarding for the Church of England

You can listen to Bishop Paul Butler responding to the Peter Ball case by following [this link](#).

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