

A statement from Bishop Peter Hancock, Church of England lead safeguarding bishop:

"The powerful BBC documentary ***Exposed: the Church's Darkest Secret*** is a stark and important reminder of the serious sexual wrongdoing of Peter Ball against many young men, including Neil Todd who took his own life, and the complete failure of the Church to respond appropriately over a period of many years.

"Both the Gibb Report, ***An Abuse of Faith***, commissioned by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the 2018 IICSA hearing into the case, highlighted our failings and the bravery of those who were prepared to speak out. The documentary brings home in a graphic way the courage of the survivors who shared their story.

"It is a matter of great shame and regret that the Church did not act to address the behaviour of Peter Ball at the time and that survivors were left to fight tirelessly for justice.

"As a Church we are committed to implementing the recommendations in the Gibb Report and those from the IICSA report. But we are aware that for the survivors, it may feel that this is all too late.

"I know from my meetings with victims and survivors that the effects of abuse are lifelong and we must never forget this. We recognise that there are survivors who have never spoken out and who may still want to come forward; we would urge them to do so.

"There is much that is being written and said about accountability and the culture of deference in the Church and it is clear that change has been too slow. We are committed to making these changes and ensuring that the Church is a safe and welcoming place for everyone.

"I once again offer all survivors a wholehearted apology and applaud their bravery in coming forward which continues to hold us to account.

"Anyone affected should please contact Emily.denne@churchofengland.org at the National Safeguarding Team."

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