



*A statement from the Church of England's Lead Bishop for Safeguarding, Jonathan Gibbs:*

“The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) has today published its final report which covers 15 different investigation strands including the Anglican Church in England and Wales, and Child Protection in religious institutions and settings. During these public hearings the Inquiry heard evidence from 725 witnesses including 94 who gave evidence as victims and survivors.

This final overall report is a reminder of the purpose of IICSA, a wide-ranging, statutory Inquiry investigating where institutions, including the Church, have failed to protect children in their care, building the case for change and improvements in how these institutions must protect children. The Church was one of the first institutions to call for this Inquiry and we are taking its recommendations very seriously.

The 458-page final report makes 20 concluding recommendations about a range of issues including Mandatory Reporting, Redress and the introduction of new Child Protection Authorities for England and Wales.

The Inquiry recommends that mandatory reporting applies to those undertaking regulated activity and those in positions of trust (which includes clergy). A new Seal of Confessional Working Party has been commissioned by the House of Bishops building on the work of a previous body and will now include this recommendation in its work. As we heard at the Church of England's IICSA hearings the Church is committed to the reporting of any concern that could lead to the harm of a child or vulnerable adult, this is enshrined in House of Bishops policy. The Archbishop of Canterbury also stated his support for mandatory reporting legislation for regulated activities.

The Church's main focus in response must first and foremost be recognising the distress caused to victims and survivors, we are truly sorry for the hurt caused by the Church and by our failures in safeguarding and we thank them for courageously coming forward to the Inquiry and sharing their experiences.

We support the comments by the Inquiry Panel, that victims and survivors of child sexual abuse must not be treated as invisible, and we must ensure they have a voice. They are victims of serious and lifechanging crimes and should have been protected by the state and by the institutions, including the Church, where the crimes were committed.

We acknowledge our poor response to victims and survivors. We must ensure that our response to victims and survivors is meaningful, compassionate and personal.

We have already responded in detail to previous recommendations and a major programme of work is underway addressing each of the specific recommendations for the Church.

We will now consider today's recommendations in detail and respond fully to the Inquiry in due course. This is part of our commitment to making

the Church a safer place for all.”

We would like to thank all those who worked on the Inquiry for their tireless dedication to ensure the process was robust and fair and one that encouraged survivors and victims to come forward.”

## **Finding support**

If you or anyone you are in contact with are affected by the publication of this report and want to talk to someone independently, please call the Safe Spaces helpline on 0300 303 1056 or visit [safespacesenglandandwales.org.uk](https://safespacesenglandandwales.org.uk).

Alternatively, you may wish to contact the diocesan safeguarding team in your area or the National Safeguarding Team – email [safeguarding@churchofengland.org](mailto:safeguarding@churchofengland.org).

There are also [other support services](#) available.

## **More information**

- [A response from the Archbishop of Canterbury](#)
- [A response from the Archbishop of York](#)

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