



The internal Church investigation into Mike Pilavachi, being conducted by the National Safeguarding Team, NST, and the diocese of St Albans, has now concluded. Having explored the safeguarding concerns fully, according to House of Bishops guidance, the investigation team has concluded that they are substantiated. These relate to conduct in his leadership and ministry, both before and after he was ordained in 2012, spanning 40 years from his time as a youth leader through to current day.

The overall substantiated concerns are described as an abuse of power relating to his ministry, and spiritual abuse; described in guidance as ‘a form of emotional and psychological abuse characterised by a systematic pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour in a religious context’. It was concluded that he used his spiritual authority to control people and that his coercive and controlling behaviour led to inappropriate relationships, the physical wrestling of youths and massaging of young male interns.

The investigation team is aware of the courage it has taken for the many people it has spoken to, to come forward and share their experiences. Support has and will continue to be offered to those who have shown courage in coming forward. Survivors who contacted the team have been alerted to the outcome.

Mike Pilavachi has resigned from his role at Soul Survivor and resigned his licence to the Bishop of St Albans, and therefore cannot currently minister in the Church of England. More widely the Church is committed to ensuring that relevant safeguarding information is passed on if he were to minister elsewhere both in this country and abroad. Support has been offered throughout the investigation.

Separately but related to the case the National Safeguarding Team has been granted permission to take out a complaint under the Clergy Discipline Measure against Mike Pilavachi, relating to a safeguarding concern post ordination. This is an ongoing process, and no further details can be given until this has concluded.

In line with House of Bishops guidance statutory authorities have been informed at various stages during the investigation and this will include the outcomes from the investigation.

The Bishop of St Albans, Alan Smith, said: “This has been a painful process for everyone involved, going back over years. I am sorry on behalf of the Church for the hurt caused and would like to acknowledge the courage of those who came forward to share their lived experience. I am aware there will be further contact with individuals about a more personalised response.”

A senior pastor at Soul Survivor remains suspended under HR processes, having stepped back voluntarily from wider ministry, while the Church of England process, as outlined in the House of Bishops guidance, runs its course.

The investigation team stressed the vast majority of the safeguarding concerns raised related to Mike Pilavachi and his abuse of power in

ministry.

Further investigations about concerns raised relating to a former senior Church of England leader linked with Soul Survivor Festivals are ongoing.

Now this stage of the process is over Soul Survivor Watford has commissioned an independent review to be led by Fiona Scolding KC. This is separate and independent of the internal Church of England investigation, with a full report to be published at the end.

## Support and contact

If you would like to speak to anyone connected to this investigation or have been affected, please be assured that any concerns raised will be treated with the utmost sensitivity and support / access to counselling is available. Please contact [safeguarding@stalbans.anglican.org](mailto:safeguarding@stalbans.anglican.org) or [safeguarding@churchofengland.org](mailto:safeguarding@churchofengland.org).

If you or anyone you are in contact with are affected by this news and want to talk to someone independently, please call the Safe Spaces helpline on 0300 303 1056.

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