

A report from a leading barrister into the Church of England's Independent Safeguarding Board (ISB) has been published today.

Sarah Wilkinson, of Blackstone Chambers in London, was asked to carry out an independent review following the decision by the Archbishops' Council to terminate the contracts of the members of the ISB following a breakdown in relationships earlier this year.

The report establishes a detailed account of events from the conception, design and establishment of the ISB until the announcement of the termination of contracts of members in June and makes findings on the reasons which led to the decision to terminate and identifies lessons to be learnt.

Speaking on behalf of the Archbishops' Council, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, and Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, said: "The Archbishops' Council wishes to thank Sarah Wilkinson for her careful consideration and work in preparing this report and to everyone who has submitted evidence or contributed to the process.

"As a Council we have begun to discuss this very thorough report and will continue to do so over the coming weeks.

"Although we will respond in more detail later, we want to say now that we deeply regret the flaws exposed by this report, especially in the design and governance of the ISB which contributed to the ultimate breakdown in relationships and take our share of responsibility for that breakdown.

"We particularly regret the impact this has had on victims and survivors of abuse.

"The report is clear that the breakdown in relationships between the ISB members following the appointment of the acting Chair - which was evident at the Archbishops' Council's meeting on May 9, 2023 - was the event which made termination of their contracts almost inevitable.

"It found no evidence for claims that other motives lay behind the decision, although it recognised it was unsurprising the subject of case reviews might have thought otherwise.

"It is vital that we now learn lessons and do not lose sight of those for whom the delivery of independent oversight is crucial - the survivors and victims of abuse – and, more widely, all those who come in contact with the Church and who place their trust in us to deliver the highest standards of safeguarding."

The report has been sent to Professor Alexis Jay as part of her ongoing work to develop proposals for a fully independent structure for safeguarding scrutiny in the Church of England.

Download the report: [Review of the Independent Safeguarding Board](#).

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.

Alternatively, you may wish to contact the diocesan safeguarding team in your area or the National Safeguarding Team at safeguarding@churchofengland.org.

There are also other support services available.

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