

The Rt Revd Paul Butler, Bishop of Southwell & Nottingham, today responded as Chair of the Joint Safeguarding Liaison Group to the Interim Report of the Archbishop's Chichester Visitation.

"Any report on safeguarding properly begins with an acknowledgement of wrongdoing and an unreserved apology to those who have been hurt. I want to begin by echoing the words of Archbishop Rowan that I am deeply sorry people have been let down by those they ought to have been able to trust.

"The writing and compilation of this report has been helped hugely by those survivors who have the courage and the willingness to share their story and help us understand just how things can go so wrong. I want to pay tribute to those survivors and their determination that others should not suffer as they have suffered.

"As the Archbishop of Canterbury has said, this report is concerned with problems relating to safeguarding in Chichester which have been specific to that diocese. The interim report describes a regrettable "dysfunctionality" of the Diocese of Chichester and how this led to a failure in both developing and implementing a robust and credible safeguarding policy. The procedures and practices in place fell well short of national best practice.

"As a national body the Church of England has made many improvements over recent years in both policy and practice but we need to continually reassess these in the light of experience. The report has identified some points where the authors believe that lessons learned from Chichester could usefully point to some further development of national policy or changes in the law. These will now be considered by the National Safeguarding Group, which will review these recommendations carefully. Any changes to the national safeguarding policies would be for the House of Bishops to agree and any changes to the law would need to go to the General Synod.

"Finally it is important to recognise that for some people reading this news story, the matters covered in the report are a personal reality.

"We would encourage anyone who has suffered abuse to come forward - their privacy and wishes will be respected. A special helpline has been set up in conjunction with the NSPCC on 0800 389 5344. Victims can also make a report to police.

"We would also urge anyone with any concerns about a child protection issue to contact the police."

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