



David Pryde

Independent Chair, Safeguarding Panel

August 2023

Dear All

I write in my capacity as the Independent Chair of the Winchester Diocese Safeguarding Panel and on behalf of all the independent members of this assembly.

Recent events at a National Level involving members of the Independent Safeguarding Board (ISB) and the subsequent presentations at Synod have been the subject of considerable negative media interest and comment.

There are always two sides to any story, and I am not in position to comment upon who is right or wrong. It is fair to say we are all deeply saddened that many victims and/or survivors feel very disappointed by this turn of events. It is profoundly distressing that people who feel they have been poorly treated in the past now feel they have lost all confidence in the Church and its commitment to holding perpetrators of abuse to account, regardless of their position or standing.

I have taken some comfort from the rapid response to this 'crisis in confidence.' The appointment of Professor Alexis Jay, the former chair of the [Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, IICSA](#), to develop proposals for a fully independent structure to provide scrutiny of safeguarding in the Church of England is something of a watershed, particularly given the brief she has been given and the undertaking by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York to get independent oversight of safeguarding in the Church of England back on track. The timescales are both ambitious and challenging but they are certainly achievable. We hope that the programme of independent case reviews is re-started with a process that victims and survivors feel able to engage with.

Whilst considerable damage has been done in recent weeks this appointment does represent a start on the road to recovery, reconciliation and renewed confidence in the commitment of the Church of England to safeguarding.

Safeguarding is the responsibility of us all and on behalf of the Diocesan Safeguarding Team and the Safeguarding Panel I wanted to provide you all with the assurance that we remain committed to providing the leadership, training and support to enable us all to make the Church a safe space for all. The events of the last few weeks have caused us to reflect on our determination to make certain victims and survivors are fully supported and what more we can do to ensure any victim or survivor can be confident that their voice will be heard. We will do everything in our power to keep people safe, without fear or favour take timely and appropriate action when abuse occurs, and put survivors first.

I have asked the team to contact the victims and survivors that we know about this week and offer our support during this difficult time.

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If you are a silent victim or survivor, or you are worried about someone who you think is vulnerable, being exploited or victimised please contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Team on **01962 737317** who will be able to help you.

Victims and survivors can also contact the Safe Spaces helpline, by calling **0300 303 1056**. Safe Spaces is a free and independent support service, providing a confidential, personal, and safe space for anyone who has been abused by someone in the Church. Their website is available here: [Safe Spaces England and Wales](#)

Regards

David Pryde
Independent Chair