

The Bishop of Durham

Bishop's Office, Auckland Castle,
Bishop Auckland,
County Durham, DL14 7NR

T: [redacted] DPA
W: [redacted] DPA
E: [redacted] DPA

Rt Revd Tim Thornton

[redacted] DPA

Rt Revd Alan Wilson

[redacted] DPA

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL
Mark Hews, Chief Executive

[redacted] DPA

14 September 2017

Dear Mark,

We have together recently been involved in a mediation process with a survivor of sexual abuse by an Anglican priest. This leads us to write to you, as three bishops in our own capacity, on a number of matters of concern. These involve both clarification and a desire to enter serious dialogue about a number of matters. We believe that we will need to meet with relevant people to follow these up fully and in detail.

The new Guiding Principles

These are very welcome. We note the welcome given to them by IICSA, but are concerned that at that specific hearing survivors were not present to offer their own comments. This we fear significantly weakens the endorsement given. Our own hard experience within the Church of England is that it is much easier to put good words on paper than it is to ensure they are fulfilled in practice. As a significant policyholder with you we believe that we need to ensure that you have clear agreed ways of guaranteeing that the guiding principles are followed. We recognise that as policyholders we are partners in that task so believe that there need to be agreed ways of helping hold each other to account for this putting good policy into good practice.

We also think that serious consideration needs to be given to revisiting cases where past practice may have reached a settlement that did not truly match the significance of the impact of the abuse.

We would ask for an ongoing commitment to reviewing the guiding principles. For example is 'fairness' really the best principle when the church would be more concerned for justice and indeed, where possible, reconciliation?

We also believe that further work needs to be done between EIG and policyholders on ensuring ongoing pastoral support of survivors after a claim has been settled. Whilst the legal and technical task may have been completed by EIG the closure of the claim often feels to a survivor like an abandonment. So how might EIG consider a way of building into future settlements an agreement with the survivor and the policyholder about ongoing support? We believe that the settlement amounts need to take this matter into much greater consideration than appears to currently be the case.

Our own past experience has shown us that EIG has not always offered consistent advice, and has not always practised its response to survivors in the way that we had been given to believe would be the case.



Diocese of Durham

Blessing our communities in Jesus' name



THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

In particular we have been very concerned to hear how 'horse trading' around the level of settlements has occurred between lawyers with little concern for the impact such an approach has had on the survivor.

Mr [Name Redacted] xxxxx

We now turn specifically to our concerns regarding Mr [Name Redacted] xxxxxx with whom the mediation has taken place.

A settlement was made with Mr xxxxxx in early 2015. This was in relation to the abuse perpetrated on him when he was a teenager by Revd [Name Redacted]. The settlement was reached before the review of how the response to his disclosure was conducted. This review is the Elliott Review. The settlement was also solely in relation to the [Name Redacted] abuse. The truth is that subsequently Mr xxxxxx was groomed and abused by Father [AN-F14]. The impact of this abuse has been lifelong and continues. It has seriously impacted his health and wellbeing. This in turn has affected his work and finances.

We are very concerned about the way in which the claim was handled at the time; particularly as it appears to be different from how Bishop Paul, in his then role as Lead Bishop for Safeguarding, understood that it would be handled from conversations with Paula Jefferson.

We also believe that the Elliott Review places fresh light on Mr xxxxxx's story which should be taken into consideration.

In the light of these concerns, and recognising the very positive developments with the new Guiding Principles for handling abuse claims, we believe that EIG should take a fresh look at the settlement reached, in the spirit of the new Guiding Principles.

We are all continually learning and understanding more about not only the nature of abuse but also its long term impact on people's lives. Our own experience with Mr xxxxxx has been more than salutary. We have had to recognise our own, and our institution's, failings. The Elliott Review, which we do not believe is perfect, does contain serious conclusions and recommendations which the Church of England has rightly committed to follow through. We believe that EIG also is learning and developing its understanding. We hope in that spirit that our requests will be taken seriously and not simply brushed away.

Whilst our specific concern at this point is Mr xxxxx we believe that handling his case afresh would offer an opportunity for EIG, and us all, to tease out the best way to work the new Guiding Principles and even to strengthen them further where evidence emerged that this would be valuable.

We look forward to hearing from you, and then following through with conversations which lead to clear action.

Yours sincerely,

DPA

DPA

DPA

Rt Revd Paul Butler

Rt Revd Tim Thornton

Rt Revd Alan Wilson

Bishop of Durham

Bishop at Lambeth

Bishop of Buckingham

cc Archbishop of Canterbury, Archbishop of York, Rt Revd Peter Hancock, Rt Revd Sarah Mullally, William Nye, Graham Tilby, [Name Redacted] xxxxxx, Michael Angell