

ARCHBISHOP'S HOUSE.
WESTMINSTER. LONDON. SW1P 1QJ

RC-A711

DPA

17 April 2019

Dear RC-A711

Thank you for coming to meet with me at Archbishop's House on Friday afternoon.
Thank you for making the journey.

I was glad to have this conversation with you. I am sorry that it has taken so long to happen.

In the course of our conversation, we reviewed together some of the emailed comments made about you by members of the Safeguarding personnel here in the Diocese of Westminster. Some of the words used were harsh and profoundly hurtful. I very much regret that they were part of an internal discussion here and appreciate how they may well have reinforced the initial harm that was done to you.

I apologise sincerely for the language that was used in those emails and I regret deeply the hurt that those words have caused you. I make this apology recognising that a far greater sensitivity is needed in everything we do, say and write to those who live with the pain and damage of childhood abuse.

I would also like to assure you that, with Peter Houghton, the recommendations of the report presented by Karen Abrams will continue to be developed in partnership between the Diocese of Westminster, the Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service, CSAS, and the National Catholic Safeguarding Commission, NCSC. You and I are both familiar with the way in which the Westminster Safeguarding Commission has reflected on these recommendations and the additional reflections of the NCSC, all expressed in Christopher Pearson's letter to you of 24th September 2018.

There is much work to be done here so as to avoid the lack of clarity which contributed to the hurt that you have experienced in the course of the work that was done in response to your reporting of abuse. That lack of clarity touched not only the initial response that you received from Westminster but also the manner in which Westminster Safeguarding, the Servite Order and you related to one another. This meant that at times the processes were not clear to you. This I regret and I hope that we can learn from all that has happened over the last 18 months or so. I also regret that at times the response you received did not include explanations which might have helped to make clear certain decisions that were taken, not least with regard to the handling of data.

At our meeting, the question on which we were pondering was the question of what can be done to help you to find some closure of this painful and distressing period in your life. I hope that this letter is a contribution to that as I hope it enables you to know that your voice is being heard and that lessons are being learned both in the manner of responses and in the framework and procedures of those responses especially in a situation such as this where a religious order is being advised by a diocese to which it is aligned.

Thank you again for coming and speaking so honestly with me. I trust that those who have given you support in recent months will continue to do so.

Please keep me in your prayers and be sure of my prayers for you.

With every good wish,

Yours sincerely

DPA

* Cardinal Vincent Nichols
Archbishop of Westminster

Cc: The Rev Mgr S O'Boyle; Mr P Houghton