

- the development of written guidance on the Church's approach to compensating victims;
- that the Church should not focus on potential financial considerations where these conflict with an appropriate pastoral response; and
- that an adversarial approach should be avoided.²⁸⁹

In 2016 the Archbishop of Canterbury publicly committed to implementing these recommendations as soon as possible.²⁹⁰

5.6.3 Prioritisation of forgiving the abuser over supporting the victim

Some literature suggests that, as with other Christian denominations, forgiving people who have sinned against God or against other people is a core element of Anglican doctrine and has been viewed by some members of the Churches as the appropriate response to an admission of wrongdoing regardless of the nature or magnitude of that wrongdoing.²⁹¹ Some authors have claimed that this has, historically, resulted in the Churches' response to child sexual abuse focusing on forgiving and supporting the perpetrator at the expense of acknowledging the needs and wishes of the victim and protecting other children.²⁹²

Current Church of England and Church in Wales safeguarding policies suggest that the Churches are attempting to redress this balance through a greater emphasis on the provision of pastoral support for victims, the involvement of statutory authorities and the provision of financial and other means of redress. The Church of England's policy also states that a priest or bishop can withhold absolution from another member of the clergy (or laity) who discloses child sexual abuse within the context of the confessional, although it advises that the withholding clergy member alert the relevant bishop to this decision in order to safeguard themselves.²⁹³

5.6.4 Use of internal church discipline systems

The literature suggests that child sexual abuse was commonly dealt with solely or primarily through internal mechanisms in the Anglican Churches across many countries, including Australia, America and England.²⁹⁴ The authors suggest that this response has been driven largely by the Churches' concerns around protecting its power, reputation and assets (as mentioned above) and therefore by its desire to keep such allegations out of the public domain. It has been argued that this lack of engagement with secular authorities, has shielded religious institutions from government involvement which might have led to earlier institutional changes²⁹⁵ and in some cases has helped to create a culture of 'almost unchallengeable authority'.²⁹⁶ It is important to note, however, that it is not always possible to ascertain from the literature whether or not these internal systems were used as a substitute for or in addition to secular criminal justice systems.

289 The Church of England (2016b). *Elliot review findings*. [Online]. The Church of England. Available at: <https://www.churchofengland.org/media-centre/news/2016/03/elliott-review-findings.aspx> [Accessed 2017].

290 *Ibid.*

291 Parkinson (2013b), *op. cit.*; Reid, D. (2006) Some theological issues around child protection. *Journal of Anglican Studies*, 4, pp 107-112.

292 Parkinson (2013b), *op. cit.*; Reid, D. (2006), *op. cit.*

293 Church of England (2010) *Protecting All God's Children: The policy for safeguarding Children in the Church of England*, 4th edition. London: Church House Publishing.

294 Swain (2015), *op. cit.*; Jones (2015), *op. cit.*; National Crime Agency (2013), *op. cit.*; Arnold (2008), *op. cit.*; Olsson, T. and Chung, D. (2004), *op. cit.*

295 Arnold (2008), *op. cit.*

296 Gardner (2012), *op. cit.*, p.101.