

Witness Name:
Statement No.: 1
Exhibits:
Dated:

THE INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Witness Statement of the Interfaith Council for Wales

I, Aled Edwards, Secretary of the Interfaith Council for Wales, will say as follows:-

The Council offers this Witness Statement following a request made pursuant to Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006. The Interfaith Council for Wales is currently reviewing its constitution and may, over the next few months, bring the current Council to an end replacing it with a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. That body may be asked to adopt a different role to the current Council.

This Statement is offered highlighting that the role of the Interfaith Council for Wales is to enable better co-operation between faith communities and institutions. It is not the representative body for faith communities in Wales and it has not been mandated or equipped in terms of capacity to address matters concerning child sexual abuse. The Council urges the IICSA to engage directly with our member faith communities and organisations. They are authorised and equipped to respond to the questions offered here.

Topic Areas

1. The Interfaith Council for Wales gathers senior interfaith representatives to further inter-religious co-operation between the Catholic Archdiocese of Cardiff, the Church in Wales, the United Reformed Church, the Evangelical Alliance, the Free Church Council of Wales, the Muslim Council of Wales, the South Wales Representative Jewish Council, the Sikh Council for Wales, the Bahai Community of Wales, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, the Unitarian Church, local interfaith groups from Cardiff, Swansea, West Wales, North Wales, Newport and Blaenau Gwent with university chaplains in Cardiff, Pontypridd and Swansea.
2. Essentially, the Council meets at a senior leader level and occasionally meets at places of worship hosted by member faith communities. The Council does not function as a representative body for faith communities in Wales. It is not mandated to speak for member faith communities and is not competent to address matters such as child sexual abuse on behalf of its members.

3. The Interfaith Council for Wales operates nationally throughout Wales but the majority of its meetings are held in Cardiff. It meets primarily as a Council of interfaith leaders. The Council encourages members to meet at each other's places of worship especially during Interfaith Week in November.
4. The Interfaith Council for Wales does not organise any activities related to child protection. The issue would have to be addressed by member faith communities and institutions.
5. The Interfaith Council for Wales has a safeguarding policy instructing members to refer any matter of concern emerging from its activities to the Secretary who has been DBS checked and trained concerning the care of vulnerable individuals. It is not offered to anyone as a model guidance.
6. The Interfaith Council for Wales has no intention to undertake work relating to child protection. It's not the Council's role.
7. It would not be appropriate, on grounds of competence and mandate, for the Interfaith Council for Wales to offer comment on gaps in the current system of child protection. The Council is not competent to do so.
8. The Interfaith Council for Wales has not engaged with its member communities and organisations concerning child abuse and is not mandated to speak for them regarding any concerns. It cannot therefore offer comment. It has no role in responding to allegations.
9. All matters concerning vetting and barring would have to be discussed directly with the Interfaith Council for Wales' individual member bodies. The Council does not offer anyone pastoral care.
- 10-15 The Interfaith Council for Wales would advise the IICSE to contact the lead child protection officers of its member bodies concerning the effectiveness of statutory guidance, the DFE Consultation, what would be useful to member bodies, the adequacy of current regulatory requirements and the issue of regulation. The Council is not competent to offer comment in these matters and has no role in their implementation.
16. The Interfaith Council for Wales has not been mandated to offer a view on whether child protection in religious organisations should be co-ordinated on an interfaith basis. The authority and all liabilities in such matters rest with the individual member organisations. The Council has no capacity to address such matters on behalf of its members.
17. The Interfaith Council for Wales has no mandate to address the needs of survivors and has no capacity to do so. The Council has no role in offering pastoral care.

18. The Interfaith Council for Wales does not represent its members in child protection issues and has therefore no competence to regulate the implementation of policies. Such matters rest solely with member bodies.

19. The Interfaith Council for Wales would not adopt a position on the NSPCC's 'Close the Loophole' campaign. It has no mandate to tell its member organisations what to do. Member faith communities and organisations are at liberty to adopt a position concerning the NSPCC's 'Close the Loophole' but the Council is not.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed:

DPA

Dated: 11/12/19

