

Safeguarding

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) was established in 2015. Its remit was to investigate various organisations including MPs, Councils and Churches.

There were to be 12 investigations in all and, in the Inquiry's own words: "The investigations will give a voice to victims and survivors of child sexual abuse, enable the Inquiry to understand how institutions have failed to protect children from sexual abuse and make practical recommendations to ensure better institutional protection for children in the future."

You might have seen that the report on the Catholic Church in England and Wales has been published. The report found that some bishops and religious provincials had let down victims of abuse. Our bishops responded to this in a statement which said: "The account given in the IICSA Report of abuse known to be inflicted on children in the Catholic Church in England and Wales in the past 50 years is shocking and overwhelming. At our meeting ..., we Bishops have stood together in profound shame. We express our sorrow and contrition before God."

In 2019, the bishops commissioned an independent review of the Church's safeguarding structures. The review commenced in October 2019 and was conducted by an Independent Chair, Mr Ian Elliott, an experienced safeguarding professional who has done much work in this area. It was published on 10 November, just before the IICSA findings.

In their statement the bishops said that: "The Elliott Report builds on all that has been achieved in our safeguarding ministry in the past 20 years, achievements also recognised in the IICSA Report. Therefore we thank profoundly all who contribute to the work of safeguarding in the Church today: the thousands of Parish Safeguarding Representatives, the professionals who work in our Safeguarding Offices in every Diocese, the Safeguarding Commissions who oversee this work and give objective and professional advice to guide our decisions, the staff of the Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service and those who serve on the National Catholic Safeguarding Commission. These, and many others, have contributed greatly to the current work of safeguarding in the Church."

The bishops have formally accepted the findings of both the IICSA and the Elliott Report.

You can read the bishops' statement and the Elliott Report at www.cbcew.org.uk and follow the Safeguarding tab.

Fr Geoffrey

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