



SEX ABUSE IN CHRISTIAN --- CHURCHES IN THE UK

Religion Media Centre

Collaboration House, 77-79 Charlotte Street, London W1T 4LP |

info@religionmediacentre.org.uk

Charity registration number: 1169562



1. CHURCH OF ENGLAND

The Scale of the abuse

- In 2016, the Church of England was dealing with 3,300 complaints of sexual abuse. This is the latest figure available, and was revealed in February 2018 by the Rt Rev Peter Hancock, Bishop of Bath and Wells, the Church's lead bishop on safeguarding issues. (He was responding to a written question from a lay member of the Church's governing body). He said most of the "concerns or allegations" related to children, young people and vulnerable adults within church communities.
(<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/feb/10/church-of-england-faced-3300-sexual-abuse-claims-figures-reveal>)

Significant cases

Peter Ball

- The former Bishop of Lewes, Peter Ball, was jailed for 32 months in October 2015 for abusing 18 young men. He is one of 15 clergy from the Diocese of Chichester convicted of child sexual offences. Allegations have been made against a further 11. An independent review, chaired by Dame Moira Gibb and published in 2017, said that over a period of many years, the Church had failed to respond appropriately to Ball's misconduct, and had colluded with Ball's efforts to protect and promote himself. Among those she criticised was a former Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Carey. The serving Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, who commissioned the report, agreed with its findings and asked Lord Carey to resign from his honorary position as an assistant bishop in the Diocese of Oxford. (www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-40368573) In December 2017, Lord Carey said Justin Welby's decision to discipline him had been shocking and quite unjust.
(<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-42401825>)

Robert Waddington

- The Church was also criticised for its handling of the case of Robert Waddington, a former Dean of Manchester. He died in 2007. Six years later it emerged that during his lifetime, allegations had been made that he had sexually abused young boys in Australia, where he had once lived, and in Manchester. This had resulted in his right to officiate at services being removed by the then Archbishop of York, David Hope. But he was not reported to the police. In a report commissioned by the Church, Sally Cahill QC spoke of a systemic failure in the Church's procedures.

In response, the present Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu, said he was "deeply ashamed that the Church was not vigilant enough". Following publication of the report, David Hope retired from his position as an honorary bishop in the Diocese of West Yorkshire and The Dales. (<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2014/24-october/news/uk/york-inquiry-finds-systemic-failure-over-abuse>)

"Joe"

- In October 2015, a man known in the media as "Joe" (not his real name) was paid £35,000 compensation by the Church. In 1976, he had been the victim of sexual assault by a senior cleric, and for four decades, he had complained about the abuse to many senior Church figures, including (it was reported by the Guardian) three bishops, and a senior cleric who later became a bishop. In a report commissioned by the Church, Ian Elliott, a safeguarding expert, spoke of the Church's "deeply disturbing" failure to respond to Joe's allegations. The report criticised the office of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, for failing to respond meaningfully to repeated efforts by the survivor throughout 2015 to bring his case to Welby's attention. (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/15/damning-report-reveals-church-of-england-failure-to-act-on-abuse>)

George Bell

- In 1995, a complaint was made to the Church of England that during the 1940s and 50s, a young female child had been abused by a former Bishop of Chichester, George Bell, who had died in 1958. This information was not passed on to the police. Eighteen years later, in 2013, a second complaint was made to the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby. It led to a police enquiry which concluded there was sufficient evidence to have arrested Bell, had he still been alive. The diocese paid compensation in September 2015 and issued a formal apology to the alleged victim the following month. ("Church of England bishop George Bell abused young child". The Guardian.)
- The Church's handling of the case was severely criticised by lawyers, academics and leading journalists, who sought to defend Bell's reputation. An independent review chaired by Lord Carlile, reported in December 2017 that the Church had "failed to follow a process that was fair and equitable to both sides" and, in a desire to avoid the mistakes of the past, had "rushed to judgement". The Church later apologised to Bishop Bell's family. ("Publication of Bishop George Bell independent review | The Church of England") But Justin Welby rejected calls for him to clear his name. (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-sussex-42779684>)

Safeguarding

- In March 2018, the Independent Inquiry on Child Sex Abuse, led by Prof Alexis Jay, was told the Church's spending on safeguarding had increased from £1.6m in 2011 to £5.1m last year. In his evidence to the enquiry, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said the Church was in the process of training about 30,000 parish safeguarding officers.
- He also told the inquiry that it had been horrifying to read the evidence of the survivors. He said: "I want to put on record – I don't know how to explain it adequately – how appalled I am and how ashamed I am of the church for what it did to those who are survivors and who are coping with this."
<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2018/23-march/news/uk/i-am-ashamed-of-the-church-archbishop-of-canterbury-justin-welby-admits-to-iicsa>
- In 2017, the House of Bishops published a document called "Promoting a Safer Church", covering topics including recruitment and training of staff, strategies for dealing with abuse allegations, and working with institutions outside the Church. Another document, "Church of England Safeguarding Overview", stated the Church's expectation that every parish in England and Wales would appoint a safeguarding officer, working under the guidance of the 42 diocesan safeguarding advisers already in place. It is now Church policy that every cleric or Church officer dealing with children or vulnerable adults as part of their work must have enhanced criminal record checks.
(Promoting a Safer Church - The Church of England)
(<https://www.churchofengland.org/.../Church%20of%20England%20Safeguarding%20...>)
- But Richard Scorer, a specialist abuse lawyer representing 21 victims of abuse, told the inquiry the Church's safeguarding measures were inadequate. He said there was still no clear obligation on the Church to report allegations of abuse to the statutory authorities. He called on the enquiry to make the Church properly accountable externally. He said an independent body should be set up to investigate individual allegations of abuse, and that this body should have the power to override bishops "unwilling to comply with their responsibilities".
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/05/church-of-england-put-reputation-first-child-abuse-inquiry-told>

The untold story?

- In November 2017, a group called Minister and Clergy Sexual Abuse Survivors said their research suggested that adult women were three times more likely than children to be sexually assaulted by male clergy. They claimed they were receiving up to eight enquiries a week relating to the sexual abuse or harassment of women.
<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2017/10-november/news/uk/assault-and-abuse-are-rife-in-the-church-women-say>

2. THE CHURCH IN WALES

The scale of the abuse

- In 2011, the Church in Wales commissioned a review into historic cases of child abuse within the Church. It was carried out by a specialist social worker, seconded from the office of the Children's Commissioner for Wales, and involved examining the Church's files of all existing and retired clergy to ensure any previously-raised concerns had been properly managed. Following the report, no criminal proceedings were taken against any cleric.
<http://www.anglicannews.org/news/2016/09/church-in-wales-invests-in-new-safeguarding-strategy.aspx>

Significant cases

Stephen Brooks

- In 1994, Brooks, a former vicar was jailed for four years after admitting 19 sexual assaults against children in Swansea. Twenty-two years later, one of his victims (unnamed) launched a claim for compensation. In an out-of-court settlement reached in July 2016, the Church in Wales agreed to pay the victim £58,500, believed to be the largest compensation award of its kind. After his release from prison, Brooks moved to London. In 2013, he resigned from his job as regional director of education, healthcare and communities at the Santander bank, after his past history as a paedophile was revealed in a national newspaper.
(<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2016/15-july/news/uk/abuse-victim-receives-almost-60k>)
(<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2487048/Santander-exec-Stephen-Brooks-quits-sick-truth-past-abusive-vicar-revealed.html>).

Jon Styler

- Styler was a former head teacher at the Church in Wales primary school in Malpas, near Newport, South Wales. In 2007, he was arrested on suspicion of historical sex offences which were said to have been committed 27 years earlier. He was released on police bail. In a letter to his solicitor, he expressed his anxiety about his family and friends finding out about the allegations, which he strenuously denied. On the day he was supposed to report back to the police, Styler hanged himself. Eleven years later, in May 2018, an investigation for the BBC One Wales programme Week In Week Out contained an allegation from a solicitor that Styler may have carried out more than 100 assaults on boys over a 25 year period.
(<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3311853/Headteacher-killed-confronted-child-abuse-claim-targeted-100-boys-25-years.html>)

Safeguarding

- A new safeguarding strategy to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults was launched by the Church in Wales in September 2016. It included the appointment of a national Head of Safeguarding, and the appointment of safeguarding officers in each of the province's six dioceses, drawn from people with backgrounds in the police, social services and the NHS.
(<http://www.anglicannews.org/news/2016/09/church-in-wales-invests-in-new-safeguarding-strategy.aspx>)

3. ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ENGLAND AND WALES

The scale of the abuse

- Over the last three decades, the Roman Catholic Church has been rocked by a series of sex abuse scandals worldwide. Repeatedly, allegations about priests were dismissed by their superiors, and priests were moved elsewhere, and were free to abuse again.
- There are no studies on the prevalence of child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church in England and Wales. However, the Independent Inquiry on Child Abuse concluded that it probably reached a peak in the 1970s. (Child sexual abuse within the Catholic and Anglican Churches: A rapid evidence assessment. IICSA Research Team November 2017) In 2017 the National Child Safeguarding Commission (a Roman Catholic organisation) reported that between 2003 and 2012, 465 allegations of sex abuse were reported by the Commission to the statutory civil authorities.

- During 2016, the Commission handled 102 allegations of sex abuse and 10 of child abuse images. (National Catholic Safeguarding Commission Annual Report 2016-17) Between 2001 and 2015, 55 priests were defrocked for sexual abuse. (National Catholic Safeguarding Commission Annual Report 2015)

Significant cases

Michael Hill

- Notable for the role played by Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, later to become the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster. In 1985, as Bishop of Arundel and Brighton, he was informed of allegations of child abuse against a Fr Michael Hill. Rather than referring the matter to the police, Murphy-O'Connor moved Hill to another parish at London Gatwick Airport, where he believed he would not be a danger to children.
- In 1997, Hill was convicted of sex attacks on nine children and was sentenced to five years. Murphy-O'Connor apologised for what he called an error of judgement. In 2002, Hill was convicted of further offences against three boys and was jailed for a further five years. One of the victims complained to the police that by failing to act on the original allegations, the Cardinal had behaved in a way that required investigation. After a three-month police enquiry, the Crown Prosecution Service decided no further action should be taken against Murphy-O'Connor.

The Benedictine Order

- Police investigations have uncovered abuse stretching back to the 1960s at private schools run by the Benedictine order. At Ampleforth, three monks and a lay teacher were convicted of assault. At Downside, four monks have faced police inquiries and two others have been put on restricted ministry. David Pearce, a former headmaster of the junior school at St Benedict's Ealing was convicted of abuse and the senior school's deputy head, Peter Allott, was convicted of possessing child abuse images.
- In March 2018 a former headmaster of the middle school at St Benedict's, Ealing, Andrew Soper, was convicted of 19 charges of rape and other crimes against ten boys at the school. He was jailed for 18 years. Prior to his trial, Soper had fled to Kosovo and had spent five years resisting extradition.

The Cardiff Archdiocese

- In October 2001, the Archbishop of Cardiff, John Ward, resigned after being summoned to Rome for a 30-minute meeting with Pope John Paul II. It had emerged that he had failed to act over allegations about two priests in his diocese. He had worked closely in the 1990s with Father John Lloyd, a parish priest and also the Archbishop's press secretary. Ward was contacted by the parents of children who claimed they'd been abused by Lloyd. Rather than informing the authorities, the Archbishop passed the parents' letters on to Lloyd himself. In 1998, Lloyd was jailed for eight years for sexual offences against children. In October 2000, another priest, Joseph Jordan, was jailed for indecent assault against boys and for downloading child pornography. Jordan had been ordained by Ward in 1998, despite Ward having been warned about Jordan's behaviour by another bishop, under whom Jordan had studied. Ward admitted mishandling both cases, but resisted calls for his resignation. Only after his interview with the Pope did he agree to resign on health grounds. In 1999 Ward himself was accused of assaulting a girl in a primary school in the 1960s, but the charges were dropped. (<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2007/mar/28/guardianobituaries.religion1>)

Safeguarding

- The Independent Inquiry on Child Abuse said that in the past, there was a tendency by both the Church of England, and the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales to keep any response to child sexual abuse within the church, and to minimise the involvement of statutory authorities. (Child sexual abuse within the Catholic and Anglican Churches: A rapid evidence assessment. IICSA Research Team November 2017).
- In September 2001, in a report commissioned by the Roman Catholic Church, Lord Nolan made 83 recommendations, including the setting up of the Catholic Office for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (COPCA). (Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales (2001) A Programme for Action: Final Report of the Independent Review on Child Protection in the Catholic Church in England and Wales (The Nolan Review)).
- Nolan also recommended the creation of a national database to vet candidates for the priesthood. The Charter for Priestly Formation (2015), sets out the selection process for priests. Prospective priests are subject to psychological assessments, DBS checks, referencing and interviews with the bishop and in some cases a selection advisory panel before being accepted to a Seminary. (Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales (2015) A Charter for Priestly Formation).

- The Church's stated policy is that all allegations of abuse reported to the Church in England and Wales are immediately passed on to the police. (rcdow.org.uk/diocese/safeguarding-and-the-catholic-church-in-england-and-wales/)
- While acknowledging that safeguarding policy had developed significantly since the Nolan report, the Independent Inquiry on Child Sex Abuse said (in 2017) there was not enough detailed information on how well policies were being implemented. (Child sexual abuse within the Catholic and Anglican Churches: A rapid evidence assessment. IICSA Research Team November 2017).

4. THE METHODISTS

- In May 2015, the UK's Methodist Church made a public apology after an investigation uncovered reports of 1,885 alleged abusers, spanning more than 60 years, including 914 allegations involving sexual abuse. The Church commissioned the review, which took three years to complete, because it said it wanted to be open about the past and to have stronger safeguarding procedures in the future. Ministers or lay employees were involved in 26% of the alleged cases of abuse, the investigation found. The enquiry was chaired by Jane Stacey, a former deputy chief executive of the children's charity Barnardo's. The Church's general secretary, the Revd Dr Martyn Atkins, said the abuse was "a deep source of grief and shame". (www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-32909444)
- In April 2017 the Church issued a document, Safeguarding Policy, Procedure and Guidance, which includes a commitment to refer allegations of abuse to the statutory authorities, including the police. It states that every Methodist church should have a Safeguarding officer, and that any adults in contact with children should undergo DBS testing. (www.smandrcircuit.co.uk/safeguarding.pdf)

5. THE BAPTISTS

- In February 2018 the Baptist Union of Great Britain completed a review of 4,370 files of British Baptist ministers, past and present, alive and dead, looking for safeguarding incidents which had not been handled appropriately. The results were not made public. However in a statement, the Baptist Union said the number of cases where further action was needed was low, but that some ministers could be removed from the list of accredited ministers as a result of the review. In other cases, files had been passed to the appropriate statutory authorities. The statement gave no further details, but did say improvements were being made to safeguarding and disciplinary processes.
(<https://www.christiantoday.com/article/baptist...review-finds...abused/125936.htm>)
- In the same month, an ex-baptist minister, Robert Dando, formerly of Bicester in Oxfordshire, admitted 13 counts of sexually abusing boys over the course of more than two decades. He was jailed for nine years and four months.
(www.oxfordmail.co.uk/.../15917282.Ex_church_minister_and_magistrate_admits_ca...)

6. JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES

- In March 2018, the Guardian reported that the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse was considering calls for a specific investigation into Jehovah’s Witnesses. The newspaper quoted an inquiry spokesman as saying they had received a “considerable number” of reports of sexual abuse.
(The Guardian/Child sexual abuse inquiry considers Jehovah’s Witnesses UK investigation)

7. CATHOLIC CHURCH IN SCOTLAND

The scale of the abuse

- Although news libraries contain many reports of abuse in Catholic institutions over several decades, of priests being prosecuted, defrocked and sometimes jailed, and of apologies being made, it appears no attempt has been made to quantify the overall scale of sex abuse in Scotland.
- The most significant cases in recent years include:
 - Cardinal Keith O’Brien, who resigned in 2013 from his position as Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh, following allegations of inappropriate and predatory sexual conduct with junior priests. He died in 2018.
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/19/cardinal-keith-o-brien-obituary>
 - In 2016 Fr John Farrell, a former head teacher at St Ninian’s Orphanage, Falkland, Fife, was sentenced to five years prison, and his colleague Paul Kelly, a teacher, to ten years for the physical and sexual abuse of boys between 1979 and 1983. It was said to be the biggest historical abuse case tried in Scotland.
<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/catholic-brothers-cared-for-boys-at-night-teacher-tells-abuse-trial-bbltmjggz>
 - Pupils at Fort Augustus Abbey School in the Highlands were allegedly abused by monks according to a BBC documentary in 2013. A former monk, Denis Alexander, who is among those accused, is in custody in Sydney and in March 2018 was resisting efforts attempts to extradite him back to Scotland. He denies all the charges against him.

Safeguarding

- The McLellan Commission, which reported in August 2015, was led by Andrew McLellan, a former moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. After taking evidence from victims, he urged the church to introduce independent safeguards to deter abuse and to be transparent with their reforms. (The McLellan Commission Web site, with the Report)
- Following publication, the Archbishop of Glasgow, Philip Tartaglia offered a “profound apology” to the victims.
(<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/.../Catholic-Church-issues-profound-apology-to-victims-of-...>)
- But in January 2018, Dr McLellan said it was extraordinary that, more than two years after the publication of his report, groups representing victims of abuse are yet to meet with the review group, and claim they have had little meaningful contact from bishops and the Church.
(www.sthelenstar.co.uk/.../15801618.Former_moderator_hits_out_over__astounding...)

Scottish Child Abuse Enquiry

- The Scottish Child Abuse enquiry opened in 2016 and is expected to run for four years. The inquiry states its purpose as being "to investigate the nature and extent of abuse of children whilst in care in Scotland", while considering "the extent to which institutions and bodies with legal responsibility for the care of children failed in their duty", in particular seeking any "systemic failures". More than 60 institutions including several private schools and church bodies are being investigated.
- However, it does not cover children who were abused while living with their natural or adoptive families, while using sports and leisure clubs or attending faith based organisations on a day to day basis. The inquiry will also not examine allegations of children being abused in non-boarding schools, nursery or day-care centres. Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry website.