



# Sex abuse in Christian churches in the UK

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## 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 to the general synod in February 2018 by the Rt Rev Peter Hancock, Bishop of Bath and Wells, the Church's lead bishop on safeguarding issues, who 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.

### SIGNIFICANT CASES

#### Peter Ball

- The former Bishop of Lewes and Gloucester, Peter Ball, was jailed for 32 months in October 2015 for abusing 18 young men. He was released on licence after serving 16 months. He was one of 15 clergy from the Diocese of Chichester convicted of child sexual offences.
- Allegations had first been made against Ball more than 20 years earlier. In 1993, he accepted a police caution and resigned as bishop but was allowed to continue officiating in the C of E.
- The abuse continued, and in 2017, two years after Ball's eventual conviction, an independent review, chaired by Dame Moira Gibb, said the Church had failed to respond appropriately to his misconduct over a period of many years, and had colluded with Ball's efforts to protect and promote himself. Among those she [criticised](#) was the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Carey. The current Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, who commissioned the report, agreed with its findings and asked Carey to resign from his honorary position as an assistant bishop in the Diocese of Oxford. In December 2017, Lord Carey said Welby's decision to [discipline](#) him had been shocking and quite unjust.
- In July 2018, the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) was told that members of the [Establishment](#), including the Prince of Wales, Lord Carey and a senior member of the judiciary, had rallied to Ball's support. William Chapman, representing victims, said: "The story of Peter Ball is the story of the Establishment at work in modern times. It is the story of how the Establishment minimised the nature of Peter Ball's misdeeds . . . and silenced and harassed those who tried to complain."

- In May 2019, the IICSA published its report into the Peter Ball case, saying that the Church had put its own reputation above the needs of Ball’s victims, with a serious failure of leadership by Carey, who was then archbishop. It said Carey had shown a compassion towards Ball that had not been extended to his victims.
- It also found that Prince Charles and other members of the Establishment were misguided in their expressions of support of Ball as he tried to refute the allegations against him. The prince and his private secretary had spoken about Ball with the Archbishop of Canterbury and had arranged for the Duchy of Cornwall to buy a property to be rented by Ball after he first resigned as a bishop in the 1990s. The prince had been “misguided”, and his actions “could have been interpreted as expressions of support for Ball and, given the prince’s future role within the Church of England, had the potential to influence the actions of the Church”, the report said.
- Peter Ball died in June 2019, aged 87.

#### Robert Waddington

- The Church was also criticised for its handling of the case of Robert Waddington, a former Dean of Manchester, who died in 2007. Six years later it emerged that allegations had been made during his lifetime that he had sexually abused boys in Australia, where he had once lived, and in Manchester. This had resulted in his right to officiate at services being removed by David Hope, then Archbishop of York, 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, Dr John Sentamu, the present Archbishop of York, said he was “deeply ashamed that the Church was not vigilant enough”. After publication of the report, Hope retired from his position as an honorary bishop in the Diocese of West Yorkshire and The Dales.

#### “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](#), 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.

## George Bell

- In 1995, a complaint was made to the Church of England that during the 1940s and 1950s, a girl referred to as “Carol” 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 inquiry that concluded that there was sufficient evidence to have arrested Bell, had he still been alive. The diocese paid £16,800 damages to “Carol” and gave her a formal apology.
- 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 judgment”.
- The Church later apologised to Bell’s family. But Archbishop Welby [rejected](#) calls to clear Bell’s name. This provoked a strong [attack](#) on Welby by the former Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, who said it was deeply unsatisfactory that no explanation had been given for the decision not to clear Bell’s name. He said a significant cloud still hung over Bell’s reputation.
- Following publicity about the case, five other people complained to the Church that they, too, had been abused by Bell. They included a woman known only as “Alison” whose complaint was passed by the Church to the police. After a three-month investigation, the police dropped the case. A senior ecclesiastical lawyer, Timothy Briden, was appointed by the Church to oversee an inquiry into all the new allegations. In a statement released in January 2019, the Church’s National Safeguarding team said Briden had concluded that the allegations were unfounded. The original 1995 allegation by “Carol” was not investigated as part of that inquiry.
- In a [statement](#) issued the same day, Welby did not refer to the later cases, but instead referred back to the earlier case of “Carol”. He apologised “unreservedly” for mistakes made in that inquiry, but again declined to clear Bell of any wrongdoing. This attracted criticism from a leading barrister, Desmond Browne QC, who had acted previously for Bell’s family, who was reported as saying that although two investigations by experienced lawyers had established Bell’s innocence, not once had the archbishop offered Bell the presumption of innocence.
- In January 2019, the current Bishop of Chichester, the Rt Rev Martin Warner, said: “Bishop Bell cannot be proven guilty, nor can it be safely claimed that the original complainant has been discredited. There is an uncertainty which cannot be resolved.”

## SAFEGUARDING

- In its report of May 2019 into the Chichester diocese, and specifically the Peter Ball case, the Independent Inquiry into Child Sex Abuse made five recommendations to improve safeguarding, some of which were already being implemented by the Church. The inquiry had earlier been told that the Church's spending on safeguarding had increased from £1.6m in 2011 to £5.1m in 2018. In his evidence to the inquiry, Justin Welby said the Church was in the process of training about 30,000 parish safeguarding officers.
- He also told the inquiry 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."
- In 2017, the House of Bishops had published a document called [Promoting a Safe 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 policy that every cleric or church officer dealing with children or vulnerable adults as part of their work must have enhanced criminal record checks.
- But in his evidence to the inquiry, Richard Scorer, a specialist abuse lawyer representing 21 victims of abuse, said 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 inquiry 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".
- This was also the view of an independent charity, the Social Care Institute for Excellence, which in April 2019, in a report commissioned by the Church, recommended that it no longer allow its 42 diocesan bishops to carry out safeguarding. It recommended that services be centralised to a more experienced national team. But the Church rejected the suggestion, saying local bishops should remain in charge of the process.

## THE UNTOLD STORY?

- In November 2017, a group called Minister and Clergy Sexual Abuse Survivors said its 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 inquiries a week relating to the sexual abuse or harassment of women.

## 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 current and retired clergy to ensure any previously raised concerns had been properly managed. Following the report, no criminal proceedings were taken against any cleric.

## 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 launched a claim for compensation. In an out-of-court settlement reached in July 2016, the Church in Wales agreed to [pay](#) the unnamed 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 history as a paedophile was [revealed](#) in a national newspaper.

### Jon Styler

- Styler was a former head teacher at the Church in Wales primary school in Malpas, near Newport in South Wales. In 2007, he was arrested on suspicion of historic sex offences said to have been committed 27 years earlier. He was released on police bail. In a letter to his solicitor, he expressed 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.

## 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

## ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ENGLAND AND WALES

### THE SCALE OF ABUSE

- Over the past 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 Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales. However, the Independent Inquiry into Child Abuse [concluded](#) that it probably reached a peak in the 1970s. 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 reported handling 102 allegations of sex abuse and 10 of child abuse images. Between 2001 and 2015, 55 priests were unfrocked for sexual abuse, according to the [National Catholic Safeguarding Commission Annual Report of 2015](#).

## SIGNIFICANT CASES

### Michael Hill

- The Hill case was 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 Father 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 judgment. In 2002, Hill was convicted of further offences against three boys and was jailed for another 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 inquiry, the Crown Prosecution Service decided no further action should be taken against Murphy-O'Connor.
- Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor died in September 2017. In September and October 2018, allegations emerged in the UK Catholic media that decades earlier, Murphy-O'Connor had abused one of Hill's victims, a girl aged 13 or 14. It was claimed that in 2009, he was interviewed under caution by Kent police, but that the matter went no further. Kent police declined to comment. It was further claimed that a Vatican investigation into the sex abuse allegation against Murphy-O'Connor was [dropped](#) on the orders of Pope Francis. Among the sources quoted were a former papal nuncio, Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano, and [Cardinal Gerhard Müller](#), a former prefect for the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith (the Vatican body that investigates sex abuse).

## THE BENEDICTINE ORDER

- The Benedictine order is heavily involved in Catholic education in the UK. Among the schools it runs are Ampleforth in North Yorkshire, Downside in Somerset and St Benedict's in Ealing, West London, all of which are attached to abbeys. All three schools have been the focus of extensive police investigations into sex abuse over recent decades.
- In August 2018, the Independent Inquiry into Child Sex Abuse published its report into Ampleforth and Downside, covering a period of 40 years. It said 10 people had been convicted or cautioned, including a priest at Ampleforth, Piers Grant-Ferris, who was jailed for two years in 2006 for 20 counts of indecent assault on boys in his care.



- But the inquiry [warned](#) that the true scale of sex abuse at the two schools was likely to have been far greater than had been proved in the courts. It said both schools had avoided giving information to, or co-operating with, statutory authorities investigating abuse. They had “prioritised the monks and their own reputations over the protection of children . . . in order to avoid scandal”. Their approach could be summarised as “a ‘tell them nothing’ attitude”. Abbots at both schools would confine suspected perpetrators to the abbey or transfer them elsewhere. Records were destroyed by both schools, the report said, and the failure of both schools to comply with safeguarding regulations had gone unchallenged by the Catholic Church.
- The Church noted the report’s conclusions and said it stood by expressions of regret and apologies already made on its behalf to victims and survivors.
- At least five former members of staff at St Benedict’s, Ealing, have been convicted or cautioned for sex abuse, among them Andrew Soper, former headmaster of the middle school at St Benedict’s and a former Abbot of Ealing. In December 2017, he was [convicted](#) of 19 charges of rape and other crimes against 10 boys at the school. He was jailed for 18 years. In 2011, Soper had fled to Kosovo and spent five years resisting extradition.
- In 2009, David Pearce, a former headmaster of the junior school at St Benedict’s, admitted 11 charges of indecent assault dating from 1975 and was [jailed](#) for eight years.
- In February 2019, the Independent Inquiry into Child Sex Abuse heard evidence about the abuse at St Benedict’s. After giving two days of evidence to the inquiry, the Abbot of Ealing Abbey, Dom Martin Shipperlee resigned over his failure to investigate abuse allegations at the school over a period of decades. He admitted that in 2001, he had failed to report a claim of sex abuse against Soper to the police “. . . because I simply did not believe that this was possible. I was outraged that such an accusation could be made.”
- The inquiry also heard evidence that the head of the Benedictine order, Abbot Richard Yeo, was made aware of sex abuse allegations against teachers and monks at St Benedict’s dating from the 1970s, but did not alert the authorities, contrary to the recommendations of a church commission on which he sat. Yeo, who stood down as president of the Benedictines in 2017, admitted to the inquiry that he had gathered evidence against Pearce in 2010, but did not inform the police because Pearce had already been jailed.

## 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 had 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.

## SAFEGUARDING

- In September 2018, the Catholic bishops of England and Wales asked the National Catholic Safeguarding Commission to [commission](#) "an entirely independent and comprehensive review" of the safeguarding structures operating within the Church.
- The Independent Inquiry into 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.
- 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).
- 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, Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, referencing and interviews with the bishop and in some cases a selection advisory panel before being accepted to a seminary.

- 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.
- While acknowledging that safeguarding policy had developed significantly since the Nolan report, the Independent Inquiry into Child Sex Abuse said in 2017 that there was not enough detailed information on how well policies were being implemented.

## 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 inquiry was chaired by Jane Stacey, a former deputy chief executive of the children’s charity Barnardo’s. The Church’s general secretary, Dr Martyn Atkins, said the abuse was “a deep source of grief and shame”.
- 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.

## 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 that had not been handled appropriately. The results were not made public. However, 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 that improvements were being made to safeguarding and disciplinary processes.

- In the same month, a former 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.

## 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.

## 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, after allegations of inappropriate and predatory sexual conduct with junior priests. He died in 2018.
  - In 2016 [Father John Farrell](#), a former head teacher at St Ninian's Orphanage, in Falkland, Fife, was sentenced to five years in prison, and his colleague Paul Kelly, a teacher, to 10 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.

- 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 has been 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.
- Following publication, the Archbishop of Glasgow, Philip Tartaglia offered a “[profound apology](#)” to the victims.
- In 2017, the Catholic Church in Scotland set up an independent review group to monitor its response to safeguarding concerns and ensure support for survivors.
- But in January 2018, Dr McLellan said it was [astonishing](#) that, more than two years after the publication of his report, groups representing victims of abuse were yet to meet with the review group, and claim they have had little meaningful contact from bishops and the Church.
- In June 2019, The Independent Review Group into Child Safeguarding issued its first report, calling on the Catholic church in Scotland to review the Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Service, ensuring it is strengthened in order to re-build trust. It recommended that each diocese should have clear policy statements for survivors and an independent person offering them advice.

## SCOTTISH CHILD ABUSE INQUIRY

- The Scottish Child Abuse inquiry 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.

## IICSA 2020

- In May 2019, the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse announced it was beginning a [new investigation](#) into child protection in religious organisations’ services and activities. It will examine child protection policies in non-conformist Christian denominations, Eastern and Coptic Orthodox communities, Pentecostal churches and independent charismatic and house churches, The Church of Latter Day Saints, The Jehovah’s Witnesses, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, Buddhism and Paganism. Public hearings will begin in 2020.

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