

Lord Sentamu's response to the Reviewer's Report:

I find myself in an unenviable position of having to reject the opinions of the Reviewer as set out in paragraphs 16.3.17 and 16.3.18 of her report. This is due to a fundamental misunderstanding on her part of the jurisdictional, pastoral and legal responsibilities of Diocesan Bishops and Archbishops in the Church of England.

I am saddened that a report that rightly seeks to review the workings of the church in order to learn lessons has demonstrated a lack of necessary understanding regarding the operation of dispersed authority in the Church of England. In addition I am disappointed that previous investigations and conclusions into this matter by the National Safeguarding Team, President of Tribunals and IICSA all seem to have been ignored or overlooked by the Reviewer.

At the conclusion of her analysis the Reviewer states at Paragraph 16.3.17 that: "The Archbishop of York should have sought advice from his diocesan safeguarding adviser at the time as to how to proceed with the letter sent from the survivor." She continues at Paragraph 16.3.18 that "The survivor's allegation that he disclosed his abuse to the Archbishop of York and he did not act on this is substantiated."

The safeguarding matter was in the Diocese of Sheffield and therefore not for the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser for York Diocese.

As the Archbishop of the Province my role was quasi-judicial in nature and any involvement needs to ensure that an Archbishop is not simultaneously actively involved in handling a matter which may subsequently become a basis for complaint to the Archbishop. This was the basis for the advice I received from my Provincial Registrar before acknowledging the survivor's letter, which was copied to me.

These matters were investigated and considered by the National Safeguarding Team of the Church of England. In March 2018 the National Safeguarding Team issued a statement: "We can confirm that the Archbishop of York responded to a letter he received from Matthew Ineson in June 2013, in which Matthew enclosed a copy of a letter to him from the then Bishop of Sheffield and his own response to the Bishop. The Archbishop did not fail to act on any disclosure made. As the Diocesan Bishop has responsibility for matters such as these in their diocese, this is a matter for the Diocesan Bishop to inform the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (Protecting All God's Children – the Policy for Safeguarding Children in the Church of England, section 4.5). For this reason, the Archbishop acknowledged Matthew Ineson's letter and assured him of his prayers."

These issues were considered separately by the President of the Tribunals following a complaint by the survivor under the Church of England Discipline Measure. The complaint, made in similar terms to those considered here by the reviewer, was not upheld for the same reasons specified by the National Safeguarding Team.

The survivor's complaint was also considered by IICSA as part of their investigations into the Church of England. The evidence I gave to IICSA was the same as that I provided to the Reviewer, namely that the action following a Disclosure to the Bishop of Sheffield was his and his alone in line with established safeguarding procedures and guidelines.

Just as with the National Safeguarding Team, the President of Tribunals and IICSA did not agree with the Reviewer's opinions but arrived at conclusions based on a proper and fully informed understanding of the jurisdictional, pastoral and legal responsibilities of Diocesan Bishops and Archbishops within the Church of England.

I found the Reviewer's opinion at para 16.3.16 odd and troubling. "The Independent Reviewer's professional opinion, however, is that no Church law excuses the responsibility of individuals not to act on matters of a safeguarding nature"

I acted within the agreed Procedures, Rules and Practice Guidance on Safeguarding, set by the House of Bishops and the Clergy Discipline Measure. Safeguarding is very important but it does not trump Church Law (which is part of the Common Law of England). And the Law is not susceptible to be used as an excuse for exercising the role given to an Archbishop. Church Law sets the boundaries for Diocesan Bishops and Archbishops.