

**PRESS RELEASE: 20<sup>th</sup> July 11:00**

**Future Safeguarding Programme for the Church of England to be led by Professor Alexis Jay**

Professor Alexis Jay OBE, former chair of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA), has today been appointed by The Archbishops of Canterbury and York on behalf of The Archbishops' Council to lead a programme of work to recommend a model for fully independent safeguarding within the Church of England.

Professor Jay will begin the Future Safeguarding Programme for the Church of England with immediate effect and will operate remotely and independently of the church, supported by the former secretary to the IICSA Inquiry, John O'Brien CBE.

The terms of reference for the Future Safeguarding Programme for the Church of England have been set, which are: to provide options and recommendations for forming an independent safeguarding body for the Church of England; make any recommendations for how further independence of safeguarding might be achieved; and make any other recommendations that are necessary or appropriate.

A report will be presented to The Archbishops' Council, expected by the end of this year, containing a clear recommendation for a model for independent safeguarding. Professor Jay will publish this report.

The Archbishops' Council, House of Bishops and General Synod will all be invited to consider the final report recommendations with decision making belonging to the appropriate bodies.

Professor Jay is then expected to be further consulted on how to carry out the work to take forward the recommendations and establish the independent body for scrutiny for the Church of England.

The principle of independent safeguarding was a key recommendation of Professor Jay's report of the IICSA into the Anglican Church in England and Wales in 2020.

**Professor Jay said:**

*"When I was Chair of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, I heard at first hand of the devastating effects of abuse within the Church of England, and of the failures, often repeated, to prevent it from occurring. I was very clear in my recommendations that safeguarding in the Church would require genuine independence in order to be fully effective. I have been just as clear with the Archbishop of Canterbury and with the Archbishop of York that this programme of work must be entirely independent of the Church too for it to succeed.*

*I would like to assure everyone that I mean what I say. My team will not include anyone employed by the church, nor will we hold meetings or conduct any business on church premises. I have explained that if I detect any attempt to interfere with or to hinder my work, I will withdraw from this programme of work immediately.*

*I also wish to make clear that my work will be fair, impartial, objective and rigorous. One of my first tasks will be to hear the views of victims and survivors of church abuse, and to listen to those involved in safeguarding at all levels of the church across England. I look forward to hearing their experiences and using this process to inform the recommendations I will make to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York.*

*It is imperative that the Church of England makes rapid and demonstrable progress on introducing genuinely independent safeguarding. Victims and survivors of abuse, people who work or volunteer within the church, and children and adults who come into contact with the church in many different ways deserve nothing less."*

**Lucy Duckworth, ending sexual abuse campaigner, said:**

*"For the thousands of adult church abuse survivors this is the last chance for the Church of England to get this right. There have been so many church led inquiries, resulting in empty promises from the Church's senior leadership but today I am grateful that with their track record of independence and rigour, both Professor Alexis Jay and John O'Brien have agreed to take on this programme of work, which if truly implemented by the church will protect the many children still at risk from clerical based abuse today. "*

**Notes to editors:**

**About Professor Alexis Jay OBE:**

In 2015, Professor Jay joined the Panel of IICSA, before being appointed as Chair of the Inquiry by the Home Secretary in August 2016. She worked for over 30 years in local government, working with vulnerable families in deprived communities. In 2014, Professor Jay led the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham, an investigation into child sexual abuse in Rotherham in South Yorkshire.

**About John O'Brien CBE:**

John O'Brien was appointed Secretary to IICSA in April 2015, reporting to the Chair to assist the Inquiry to fulfil the terms of reference. John joined the civil service in 2002 as Director of the Criminal Records Bureau. In 2006 he moved to the Home Office, where as Director of Safeguarding he was responsible for policy on public order, public risk and safeguarding and public protection, including responsibility for sponsorship of the Disclosure and Barring Service and the Security Industry Authority. He received a CBE for services to safeguarding in 2023.

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