

Comments on Gilo's treatment by the Church of England

Gilo, survivor and co-creator of website House of Survivors, says:

“It has taken me nearly four years and many emails, many blanked by senior people, to begin to get to the truth of all this. The obfuscation and blanking has been systemic. Archbishops' Council really wanted to hide this. I think it inevitable that William Nye, the Secretary General of Archbishops' Council must now go, and the Audit Committee call time on Archbishops' Council handling of this and much else of their misconduct. Church House and Archbishops' Council now require complete overhaul and reboot with change of leadership culture at the top of the Church so that transparency becomes the standard and not the exception.”

Andrew Graystone says:

“I was present at a meeting in 2020 with a member of the Archbishops' Council, who was charged with considering Gilo's complaint. We were told that there was no evidence that William Nye had any awareness that a meeting had taken place between Ecclesiastical Insurance and the National Safeguarding Team (NST) at which the management of the reputation of the church and Ecclesiastical (the Church's insurer) was discussed. We were told in terms that Mr Nye was not present at the meeting, and that he could not have been present, because he is always on holiday at that time of year. That turns out to have been untrue. Mr Nye was present at the meeting, though he appears to have informed the reviewer that he was not. The result is that Gilo's complaint was dismissed on the basis of an untruth.

The lack of transparency and integrity on display here is not trivial. Casual dissembling causes further distress to people who have already been damaged by the church. Survivors of church abuse like Gilo have little enough reason to trust church officers. When a complaint against the Archbishops' Council is handled with smoke and mirrors, how can the church expect to rebuild that trust?”

Ian Elliott, reviewer and safeguarding expert, says:

“In my professional work as an independent safeguarding consultant, I often meet with an organization that has lost sight of why it exists. They often develop behaviours that are causing great harm to themselves and to others. In my view, the Church of England is such an organization. It is a Christian Church that is supposedly based on a set of values that requires it to act with integrity and to be truthful in its interactions with others. It is required to be good witness for the Gospel. Through my direct experience, I have found that this is not the case for parts of this Church. To hide and deny what you know is true, are the actions of a corrupt body rather than a Christian Church. It is and should be unacceptable to all right-minded people, who are within or outside the Church, and it needs to be ended now.”

Helen King, Synod member, says:

“I’ve been copied into emails about the Elliott review and EIG for well over a year and can see for myself how long it takes to get any sort of answers from the Church. The lack of engagement, the repeated delays, the buck-passing, the denials that later have to be retracted, the systemic obfuscation have all given me sharp insight into the deep frustration which too many survivors experience when trying to find justice. It is extremely disappointing that the Archbishops Council and even the Bishop of London continue to prioritize the reputation of the Church over the impact on the individuals damaged by it.”

Clive Billenness, Synod member and Audit Committee member, says:

“Before being elected to the Audit Committee of the Archbishops’ Council 18 months ago, I spent almost 30 years reviewing governance arrangements across both the public and private sectors. I am deeply concerned about the repeated apparent shortcomings in safeguarding within our Church.

Recently we have seen the way that public trust in the Post Office has been undermined by poor governance and the lack of transparency. It is important that our Church works hard to demonstrate that it remains worthy of trust. I will wish to discuss with my colleagues on the Audit Committee what the implications are of both this and other recent safeguarding problems and whether we can use our influence to help prevent further repetitions.”

Martin Sewell, Synod member, says:

“This is an important story and yet again we see that the Survivor has had to do all the work across nearly four years to drag the truth out of the Church which has responded with dishonesty, diffidence, delay and lack of integrity. The Wilkinson Review referenced the lack of proper minutes of important meetings leaving a deficient audit trail. This appears to be the case here, and the Secretary General is primarily responsible for this. Archbishops Council owe Gilo and also Ian Elliott, a very clear apology for their skewered treatment of the Elliott Review, and for their dishonest handling of a formal complaint. We have to ask of Archbishops Council: “Can we trust these people to ever learn?”