

This statement is issued at 1615 on Thursday 7 November on behalf of a number of victims and survivors of John Smyth QC. It is a response to the publication by the Church of England of the Makin Review. Bracketed references refer to that review.

We welcome the publication of the Makin Review into the physical abuse of between 115 & 130 known males since 1971 (2.4 & 16.21) and the mental suffering of many more. We hope this Review will bring some form of, even partial, healing to all those impacted directly and indirectly over the last 50 + years.

John Smyth was indeed the Church of England's very own Jimmy Saville (17.2)

We are a group of some of John Smyth's UK victims comprising both survivors who are active in the Church of England (C of E) today right through to those who lost their faith as a direct result of John Smyth and how the C of E has treated us since 1982.

By way of introduction we deeply regret that the publication of the Review has had to be advanced from next Wednesday 13 November, and the impact that advancement is having on many.

Firstly we want to make it clear that it remains our belief that in many, but not all, dioceses up and down the country, there is much excellent local safeguarding work going on, away from all of Church House, the NST (National Safeguarding Team), Lambeth & Bishopthorpe palaces & the C of E hierarchy of Bishops, Archbishops Council and General Synod. We are actively encouraged by that local work, but utterly dismayed by the behaviour of the C of E hierarchy, including the dismissal of the ISB (Independent Safeguarding Board) whose work was highly valued by victims & survivors.

We note the full 27 recommendations on pages 249 through 251, many of which reflect similar recommendations in dozens of previous safeguarding reports over 40+ years, that the C of E has previously chosen to ignore or disregard. We urge readers to consider that full list of these 27 recommendations because historically with respect to previous Reviews, the C of E has sought to restrict focus to summary/key recommendations alone (here 1.14 on pages 2 through 3), presumably in an attempt to minimise its own culpability. Regrettably we have little confidence that the C of E will take any more notice of the recommendations of this Review than it has of all those recommendations of the many previous safeguarding reports (Recommendation 6).

We note that publication of the Makin Review is more than 1630 days late. Justice delayed is justice denied, particularly to all those John Smyth victims who have now died. We attribute the vast majority of that delay to the deliberate under-resourcing of the project by the C of E (See also 22.1.11 through 22.1.14). We have been making this point to the C of E for the last five years.

We are concerned that in a report of over 250 pages and 29 Appendices of another 250 pages or so, the only examples of good practice the reviewer could identify with respect to any C of E clergy were a single, now retired, individual bishop, see below, and two behaviours of a 2017 Core Group (para 24).

One of the most pernicious lies of the last 40+ years of the Smyth saga is the claim repeated by James Stileman (and Rev David Fletcher since 1982?) in Appendix 22, page 4 of 35, on the page with subscript 2, that 'when interviewed by Mark Ruston [in Feb 1982] the victims defended John Smyth to the hilt'. This, and other similar equally false claims that are debunked in the Review, have been used for decades by the likes of Titus Trust to justify blocking any proper investigation. Several of us victims are keen to give evidence under oath that the exact opposite was the case.

We are concerned that the Review demonstrates that entire Church hierarchy still has no understanding of trauma-informed approach (22.1.8) despite this being established many times previously, including most recently in the 2023 Wilkinson Review.

The 185 page Wilkinson Review was completed in 2 1/2 months from publication of the agreed Terms of Reference in September 2023 to submission of her final report in November 2023.

The Church continues to engage by utterly inappropriate means with victims & survivors in 2024. It has shown no interest in addressing this throughout the last 40 + years (Recommendation 22).

We are particularly concerned that some Church leaders seek to characterise John Smyth as a 'lone wolf'. In fact he is part of a long and ongoing tradition of abusers, many of whom have targeted the C of E as a 'soft touch' particularly because of the historic and current lax treatment of abusers (18.4.1 through 18.4.3). Such abusers include the likes of Rev Colin Pritchard, Jeremy Dowling, Bishop Peter Ball, Bishop Victor Whitsey, Dean Robert Warrington, David Smith, Chris Brain, Rev Jonathan Fletcher, Rev Iain Broomfield, Canon Andrew Hindley, Canon Mike Pilavachi and dozens more.

The Church hierarchy retains to this day a deeply ingrained culture of deference (17.1.11 to 17.1.13), cover-up (17.1.14 through para 20) and groupthink (para 21) that has allowed all of these, and many more, perpetrators to "flourish". The Church's wider failings are summarised in para 22.

We are concerned that the publicity given to the Church's many ingrained historic and current failings may encourage other victims to overcome their completely understandable past reticence and come forward with new/additional information regarding John Smyth and other cases. The C of E needs to commit today to produce a follow-up report in 18 months time based on such future evidence, should that be necessary.

We are surprised at the extent of material (some of it in the public domain in places like Andrew Graystone's 2021 book, Bleeding for Jesus & Henry Olonga's autobiography) not included in the (main) report, including by way of a single example, Justin Welby's notorious 2017 LBC interview.

Despite Archbishop Welby's specific assurances during this broadcast interview in 2017 that a crime was reported to the police, this Review confirms that this was NOT the case (18.1 through 18.4)

These omissions of material may have derived from an unwillingness to risk identifying figures who are now senior figures in the C of E (3.19 through 3.21 & 18.4.9 through 18.4.12), or from an unwillingness to challenge the C of E's very restrictive Terms of Reference for this Review or the time period beyond July 2019, but those are matters for another day.

Throughout the last eight years in particular we have continually regretted that the Church has shown so little concern for or interest in John Smyth's victims in Africa, who constitute not only the vast numerical majority of his victims, but all of whom were believed to be under-age. Apparently unlike the Church of England hierarchy, we believe that God shows no partiality and that His concern depends neither on the colour of a person's skin nor the continent they live in. We are therefore particularly supportive of para 23 & Recommendations 25 through 27.

We note that Jan Pickles' Review of John Smyth's involvement at Winchester College was published almost 3 years ago in January 2022, and we commend that report for further information.

We want to acknowledge the leadership and exemplary behaviour of Bishop Peter Hancock (identified by Keith Makin (24.1.2)) and a tiny handful of others who prefer to remain anonymous, not least for their own protection. However the Church Hierarchy have actively persecuted us, particularly since 2017 and continue to do so in 2024. We continue to be lied to in 2024, and numerous promises made to us continue to be broken. All of this has been from the C of E hierarchy, including the most senior Bishops and administrators in the C of E in 2024.

However many of us have received marvellous support from friends, family and others, from both within the C of E and from outside.

We would like to think that delivery of this Review's Recommendations in full would be some small reward for their patience and love.

Above all else, we hope that when the next Peter Ball, John Smyth, Chris Brain, Mike Pilavachi or whoever begins their abuse (as they most certainly will), the Church of England will finally break the habit of a lifetime and take victims and survivors seriously, rather than seek to 'manage the Church of England's reputation and protect their own' as they currently do to this very day.

Issued by Andrew Graystone on behalf of a number of victims and survivors of John Smyth.
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