

Statement from Bishop of Chichester, Martin Warner

“Lord Carlile’s Independent Review is a demonstration of the Church of England’s commitment to equality of justice and transparency in our safeguarding practice. The diocese of Chichester requested this “lessons learned” Review.

“We welcome Lord Carlile’s assessment of our processes, and apologise for failures in the work of the Core Group of national and diocesan officers and its inadequate attention to the rights of those who are dead. We also accept the Report’s recognition that we acted in good faith, and improvements to Core Group protocols are already in place. Further work on them is in hand.

“The Report demands further consideration of the complexities of this case, such as what boundaries can be set to the principle of transparency. Lord Carlile rightly draws our attention to public perception. The emotive principle of innocent until proven guilty is a standard by which our actions are judged and we have to ensure as best we can that justice is seen to be done. Irrespective of whether she is technically a complainant, survivor, or victim, ‘Carol’ emerges from this report as a person of dignity and integrity. It is essential that her right to privacy continues to be fully respected.

“The good deeds that Bishop George Bell did were recognised internationally. They will stand the test of time. In every other respect, we have all been diminished by the case that Lord Carlile has reviewed.”