

21st December, 2011

Dear Trustee

Open Letter on Behalf of Survivor Groups, NAPAC and The Survivors Trust

NAPAC and The Survivors Trust have recently issued the attached statement in relation to discussions held over the past two years with the aim of improving the Church's response to victims of sexual abuse.

We are now writing to you with regard to the recent decision by the Trustees of Portsmouth Diocese to appeal the case involving JGE in the High Court regarding the vicarious responsibility of an employer for the actions of an employee.

We understand you must act as good stewards of diocesan funds and no doubt part of this decision was made with money (compensation) in mind but we would like you to carefully consider the consequences of your actions on the person at the centre of this case, a victim of childhood abuse.

Pete Saunders of NAPAC says:

"Child abuse is possibly the most heinous of crimes and Jesus Christ made special mention of the consequences for those who perpetrate such crimes. Indeed I believe child abusers were the only category of offender that Jesus specifically warned during his ministry on Earth.

Here at NAPAC we hear from victims of this crime every day and they tell us of the life-changing and life-long devastation it causes. And often it is not just them it affects. It can affect whole families, and often whole communities. Indeed, as a former British Home Secretary said a few years ago, "child abuse tears apart the fabric of society". It has also been described as *murder of the soul* and for a Christian this makes what we are talking about not just a crime but also an act of pure evil."

Fay Maxted of The Survivors Trust says:

"The discussions between NCSC/CSAS and survivor groups were starting to show promise of a new response to victims/survivors of sexual abuse based on developing trust and belief that the Church was committed to changing the way victims/survivors are supported. I believe any potential financial gains to be made by appealing the High Court decision will be completely lost in terms of trust and faith in the Church being prepared to respond appropriately and compassionately to the needs of victims/survivors above all else."

Although neither NAPAC nor the Survivors Trust represent any specific people of Faith or non-faith, for most of us involved with this work it is far more than just a job. We all acknowledge we are battling evil.

We know that you were not represented at the recent Bishops Conference in Leeds where all present signed up to the Towards Healing protocol and we find that very disturbing. However, in the light of your decision to lodge an appeal, it is understandable that you would not have been able to agree a document that puts victims first.

In the light of the comments made above we urge you to:

- Withdraw the appeal immediately,
- Publically apologise and acknowledge the abuse perpetrated by those who work for the Diocese.
- Financially compensate the victims of these crimes where appropriate, ensuring that further emotional damage caused by lengthy legal processes and damaging statements are also acknowledged
- Ensure that yourselves, Bishop Hollis, all your clergy and lay staff take part in regular safeguarding training, administered by survivor charities, or third parties, who are independent from the Church, and possess the clinical understanding of the effects of abuse.

We more than urge you do these things – we beg you.

At this time of Christmas when we hear the message of peace to all men and woman, we implore you to re-think the consequences of your past actions and act according to what is not just legally just but what is morally just.

There is no greater scourge affecting this world than the abuse of our children. You can help us to eradicate this by signing the protocol and reaching out to victims and survivors.

Thank you and Happy Christmas.



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