

To: Archbishop Sarah Mullally and members of the Archbishops' Council

An Open Letter about the Church of England Redress Scheme

Dear Archbishop Sarah and members of Archbishops' Council,

We are the victims and survivors of church abuse who have served as survivor representatives on the Survivor Working Group (now Advisory Group) and the Board for the Redress Scheme.

The Redress Scheme was first mandated by the Church's General Synod in 2019. The fact that it is only now coming close to delivery we interpret as a regrettable symptom of the structural resistance and institutional "drift" identified in the recent INEQE Audit. Over the past five years we have contributed hopefully to the Redress Scheme because it is extremely important to many of our fellow victims and survivors, and also because we believe it represents a sign that the Church of England has started to face up to the abuse in its midst. We wanted our participation and expertise to ensure it would be the best scheme that it could be. We have borne endless delays, apologies and changes in staff to try to deliver a satisfactory scheme. We have repeatedly heard representatives of the church claiming that the scheme is being developed in collaboration with survivors. This is only partially true. In many key areas, and especially in recent months, we have not been consulted at all, and where we have been consulted our views have not been taken into account.

The Abuse Redress Measure passed by Parliament states that victims and survivors should be treated with dignity, respect and compassion. With our detailed knowledge of the scheme as proposed, we no longer accept that it will fulfil these three criteria. Here are just three examples of the fundamental problems remaining in the scheme.

1) Therapeutic support

Under the current proposals survivors who need funding for therapeutic support will be required to submit to a fresh psychiatric assessment. This will apply whether or not they are claiming for psychiatric injury. For example, the fact that a person has suffered Child Sexual Abuse in a church context would not automatically qualify them for funding for counselling. The psychiatric assessor will be selected by the scheme, and the type and extent of the therapy funded will be limited to whatever is prescribed by the assessor. A single therapy provider is appointed to deliver the therapy. It's not up to the scheme to assess a survivor's mental health or therapeutic needs, or to prescribe the type of therapy they should have; nor is the scheme equipped to do so. Neither are psychiatrists the only or best profession to assess trauma survivors' therapeutic needs. It also goes against the current Responding Well to Survivors policy which applies to any first-time disclosers through the scheme. This 'we know best' approach removes agency from survivors in a highly sensitive area. It is not person-centred, which the church has repeatedly claimed the Scheme to be, and shows a distinct lack of respect for survivors' knowledge of their own needs. We have leading independent experts (including members of the Royal College of Psychiatrists) who share our concerns.

2) Financial Redress

The Church has promised that the Scheme will be generous yet has actively tried to prevent this. It has published a maximum achievable amount of £667,000 yet this is effectively impossible with the current tariff and especially since the effective removal of the 20% uplift. This key section of the provision promises a 20% uplift in financial awards for those whose abuse involves 'exceptional circumstances'. The criteria for this uplift have been determined so as to remove any discretion in the award. They are drawn so tightly that we do not believe any victim will be deemed to fulfil them. There is a clear lack of compassion and generosity. We have asked for evidence that any case at all could meet this threshold, and none has been provided.

3) Justice

For many survivors, Redress and apology are only meaningful if they actively commit to justice and accountability. We have asked for the Scheme to provide a restorative justice route and to ensure that everything possible is done to ensure accountability for harm done, in a way that is meaningful to the survivor. As far as we are aware, no work has been done on these vital aspects of the Scheme and the church's engagement with survivors' needs, despite our repeated requests.

Redress will only be meaningful if the process itself does not reproduce the loss of power that survivors have already experienced. A significant further issue is that Kennedys will not work with us or other survivors, despite the procurement process stating they would. For all these and other reasons we have severe doubts about the sincerity of the Church's intentions, and the competence of its chosen agents in running the scheme without doing further damage to already traumatised victims and survivors. Consequently, we no longer feel able to support the scheme in its current form. We say this with profound regret, feeling that we have failed many of our fellow survivors, whose interests we have been trying to represent.

We are asking Archbishops' Council, as the body legally responsible for the Scheme, to ensure that the Board, the Redress Team and the Scheme Administrators engage with us over these and the other issues we have repeatedly try to address and not been heard, and make the essential changes to key aspects of the Scheme to ensure it is fit for purpose and will not harm survivors further. Currently we cannot support the scheme as it is unsafe and risks retraumatising victims and survivors. But we are not walking away, as we know we carry the hopes of many survivors that this Scheme will live up to all that has been promised, and we remain committed to doing all we can to ensure that it does. We urgently seek a response that enables us to work collaboratively with the Redress Scheme Team, the Board, Kennedys and yourselves, to ensure that the Scheme is fit for purpose and delivers a fair, effective and appropriate process that meets the principles in the Redress Measure that require the scheme to treat every applicant with dignity, respect and compassion.

Yours,

All five members of the Redress Scheme Survivor Advisory Group.

5th September 2026

Group member Jane Chevous is available for all communication: jane@survivorsvoices.org
We ask for your response within five working days.