

BHATIA BEST SOLICITORS

PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS OF ABUSE ARE “STILL THE LAST PEOPLE THE CHURCH THINKS OF”

Today, the Independent Inquiry on Child Sexual Abuse publishes its latest report on the Archdiocese of Birmingham. The findings of the Inquiry detail devastating failures by the Archdiocese of Birmingham over decades.

Bhatia Best represents RC-A1 (also known by the Inquiry as D2), an adult survivor of child sexual abuse at two now closed residential schools for children with special educational needs operated by the Archdiocese of Birmingham. He was subject to horrific acts of physical and sexual abuse in the care of the Church during the 1970s. He first reported his abuse to the police and to the Archdiocese of Birmingham in 2005. His evidence was read as part of the Inquiry’s hearing in November 2018.

RC-A1 (also known as D2), said:

“I was a child in the care of the Archdiocese of Birmingham. I spent years as a victim of abuse at Croome Court and Besford Court Schools. I was failed as a child and failed again as an adult when I found the courage to report my abuse to the Archdiocese. I’ve been brushed off and dismissed by the staff of the Archdiocese until the Inquiry got involved. I got no apology from the Church until after the Inquiry put them on the spot.

I told the Inquiry that my life has been devastated. The words coming from the Archbishop about getting it right now all feels like too little, too late. If they really mean it, they must shine a light on the horrors of Croome Court. I am not on my own. Us boys of Croome Court

were taken away from our families into the 'care' of the Church. They didn't care then. They need to show us they do now."

The partner and carer of D2, said:

"Since reporting in 2005, we have been waiting for an apology. What did the Church think it was doing apologising to the congregation at the end of our road before saying sorry to us in person? We have been living with the impact of the abuse D2 suffered for decades. Victims and survivors and their families are still the last people the Church thinks of."

Jon Wakefield, Partner, Bhatia Best, said:

"We welcome the report of the Inquiry published today. Its findings are devastating for the Archdiocese of Birmingham and the Roman Catholic Church more generally. They must address head on how decades of head-in-the-sand failure have devastated the adult survivors of child sexual abuse.

The Inquiry has described the devastating and lifelong impact that child sexual abuse can have upon victims and survivors. My client, RC-A1 (also known as D2), gave powerful evidence to the Inquiry about his sexual abuse at Croome Court and Besford Court residential schools, which were run by the Archdiocese.

Today, we call upon the Archdiocese of Birmingham to agree that they will establish an Independent Inquiry into physical and sexual abuse at Croome Court and Besford Court Schools. D2 and the other boys abused in those schools deserve more than a long overdue apology. They need to be heard and they need answers."

For further comment or information please contact Jon Wakefield, Partner, Bhatia Best on 0333 0163333.

Notes for editors:

1. RC-A1/ D2 is represented by Bhatia Best and Caoilfhionn Gallagher QC and Angela Patrick of Doughty Street Chambers.
2. The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) is an independent statutory inquiry, established under the Inquiries Act 2005. Its terms of reference require it to, *“consider the extent to which State and non-State institutions have failed in their duty of care to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation; to consider the extent to which those failings have since been addressed; to identify further action needed to address any failings identified; to consider the steps which it is necessary for State and non-State institutions to take in order to protect children from such abuse in future; and to publish a report with recommendations.”*
3. The Inquiry is conducting investigations into a range of topics and areas. One investigation strand concerns the Roman Catholic Church. As part of this investigation, the Inquiry has conducted a case study into the Archdiocese of Birmingham, which serves a Roman Catholic population of nearly half a million people and is one of 22 dioceses within the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales. Public hearings in this investigation took place over six days, between 12 and 16 November 2018 and on 13 December 2018, and today’s report contains the Inquiry’s findings following those hearings.
4. The full report of the Inquiry is available here: <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/publications/investigation/birmingham-archdiocese>
5. The evidence of RC-A1/ D2 was read on Day 2 of the hearing (13 November 2018) and is available here, at pages 91 - 103: <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/key-documents/7602/view/public-hearing-transcript-13-november-2018.pdf>
6. A further hearing in the Roman Catholic Church investigation will take place from 28 October 2019 to 8 November 2019 at the Inquiry hearing centre at 18 Pocock Street, London SE1 0BW.