

BHATIA BEST **SOLICITORS**

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VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS OF ABUSE CONTINUE TO BE FAILED.

TIME FOR THE CHURCH TO GET ITS HOUSE IN ORDER.

Today, the Independent Inquiry on Child Sexual Abuse publishes its latest report on the Roman Catholic Church. The findings of the Inquiry detail devastating failures by the Church over decades and notwithstanding the Inquiry's focus on the Roman Catholic Church. The Inquiry is highly critical of the ongoing failure on the part of the most senior church leaders – in England and in Rome - to prioritise the interests and welfare of the victims over the reputation of the church and the clergy.

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 and is summarised at page 25 of the Report (Section B1 paragraph 3.2).

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

"I spent years as a victim of abuse at Croome Court and Besford Court Schools run by the Archdiocese of Birmingham. The Report recognises the devastating impact this has had on my life and on my family. It left me broken; the Church brushed me off and I got no apology until the Inquiry. The Report is damning. How I was treated was typical of the disrespect the Church and its leaders had for victims and survivors of abuse. For decades, the Church has put its needs

above the needs of victims. Even today, I remain without support while the Church provided quick and ample support for abusers. For decades, report after report, victims have been failed. They continue to be failed.

Words are good; now the Government and the Inquiry needs to act to make sure the Church gets its house in order.”

Jon Wakefield, Partner, Bhatia Best, said:

“We welcome the report of the Inquiry published today. Its findings are devastating for the Roman Catholic Church. 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 of Birmingham. This experience was compounded by the disrespect afforded to RC-A1 in his contact with the Church both before and during the Inquiry.

The failures of the Church to prioritise the victims over its own and the continuing lack of real and tangible remorse pervades to this day. The report is rightfully critical of the Church from the very top in Rome. It is said that “Their lack of cooperation passes understanding.”

The lack of leadership of Cardinal Nichols, and his continuing preference for protecting the reputation of the Church over its victims make him unfit to continue in office.”

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. Further hearings in the Roman Catholic Church investigation took place from 28 October 2019 to 8 November 2019 at the Inquiry hearing centre at 18 Pocock Street, London SE1 0BW, and today’s report contains the Inquiry’s findings following those hearings.
4. The full report of the Inquiry published today is available at: <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/publications/investigation/roman-catholic-church>
5. The Inquiry has issued a press release to accompany the Report at: <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/news/inquiry-finds-catholic-church-prioritised-reputation-over-welfare-children>
6. The report of the Inquiry following the Archdiocese of Birmingham case study is available here: <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/publications/investigation/birmingham-archdiocese>
7. The evidence of RC-A1/ D2 was read on Day 2 of the hearings on the Archdiocese of Birmingham (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>

8. Closing submissions were made on behalf of RC-A1/D2 on 8 November 2019. In these submissions, he was critical of the treatment of victims and survivors by the Church and critical of the conduct of Cardinal Vincent Nichols towards him at the Inquiry. He called for reform of the procedures and practices of the Church; and for the Inquiry to recommend that subject the Church be subject to independent scrutiny and a statutory requirement for mandatory reporting (from page 28): <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/key-documents/15661/view/Public-hearing-transcript-fri-8-Nov-2019.pdf> (The Inquiry will return to mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse and other matters in its Final Report).