

**A statement from the President and Vice President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales**

“Yesterday’s news of the charges brought against Bishop David Oakley is deeply distressing for all, both within the Catholic community and beyond.

“We are profoundly aware that the report of this allegation may reawaken painful memories for many people and again offer an unreserved apology to those who have been hurt by abuse in the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

“In this moment we would like to provide pastoral reassurance on the commitment of the Church to safeguarding.

“The Catholic Church in England and Wales maintains a zero-tolerance policy for abuse in the Church and in wider society, and we are cooperating fully with the statutory authorities.

“Our immediate focus is on providing pastoral support and ensuring that we, as the Church, can continue our mission safely and transparently.

“Anybody who comes to our parishes, schools and communities must be safe and we are resolute in our commitment to safeguarding.

“We reiterate the open invitation from the bishops to meet with and listen to victims and survivors, so that we can learn from and be guided by their experiences as we continue to make our communities safe places.

“We are committed to continual review and development, assisted by the independent auditing work of the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency, so that all our communities are places of safety and sanctuary for all.”

**Archbishop Richard Moth**

*President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales*

*Archbishop of Westminster*

**Archbishop Bernard Longley**

*Vice-President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales*

*Archbishop of Birmingham*

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