



NEWS RELEASE

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KENDALL HOUSE REVIEW REPORT

The Rt Rev James Langstaff, Bishop of Rochester hosted a press conference this morning to share the findings of the Kendall House Review panel report with members of the media.

In his opening statement, Bishop James said,

“It was in 2014 that I determined the need for some kind of review in relation to Kendall House, and I made my intentions public in early in 2015.

The number of former residents making serious allegations about their treatment during their time at Kendall House was steadily increasing, and it was clear that no other body was going to initiate any review or enquiry.

It took longer than I might have wished both to find the right people to undertake the review and to clarify the terms of reference for the review with them. However, I am convinced that Professor Sue Proctor and her colleagues Samantha Cohen and Ray Galloway were the right people to undertake this work on behalf of the diocese of Canterbury and Rochester. I believe that the depth, detail and outcome of their work vindicate this decision and on behalf of the diocese of Canterbury and Rochester, I thank them for their dedication to what has been a challenging piece of work.

I would now like to invite Professor Proctor to speak about the review and its findings.”

Professor Sue Proctor who chaired the conference then introduced the findings of the review panel. She said,

“Before sharing the findings of this review, we would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the important contribution of all those who spoke with us as part of the process. In particular, we wish to thank all the former residents and their families who took part, for their candour and courage in coming forward and recounting sometimes painful and emotional experiences about their time at Kendall House. The consistency in their accounts is striking and paints a compelling picture of life at the home. We are also grateful to those former staff who spoke with us.

Kendall House was a private children’s home for girls, based in Gravesend, Kent. It was run and funded by the Church of England, overseen by a body called the Joint Council for Social Responsibility for the Dioceses of Rochester and Canterbury. It closed in December 1986.

In December 2015, the current Bishop of Rochester commissioned an independent panel to review events at Kendall House from 1967 until its closure. Whilst it was running, and in the years since its closure, a number of allegations of abusive and inappropriate practice there had been made by former residents. These included inappropriate and over-use of medication, and accounts of emotional, physical and sexual abuse.

The scope of the review was as follows:

- To hear and consider the accounts of former residents of Kendall House, and other relevant witnesses, including complaints about the use of drugs as a means of behavioural control and allegations of emotional, physical and sexual abuse;
- To consider relevant materials relating to Kendall House; and
- To review the relevant actions of those who worked at Kendall House, or who were associated with its service provision during the above time frame.

We have considered hundreds of written documents, including the records of 44 residents, many associated reports, records of meetings and other correspondence. We have also heard recollections and descriptions of life at Kendall House from 20 former residents, a number of their friends and relatives, and 15 former staff and others who had an association with the home. These recollections refer to periods in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.

Girls who were placed at Kendall House were aged between 11 and 16 years and often had serious behavioural or emotional problems. Many had been to a succession of children's homes and had very troubled and difficult backgrounds. Placements ranged from a matter of weeks to over four years. Girls at Kendall House could be difficult to manage, often violent, aggressive and mistrusting of authority figures. They were also vulnerable and in need of professional support, understanding and care.

Whatever the reason for their admission, they experienced a regimented, rigid culture, where docile conformity was demanded. Girls were supervised by a largely

unqualified workforce, who in turn were led by the dominant and authoritarian figure of the superintendent, until 1985 when she retired.

From 1967, medical oversight was provided by a consultant psychiatrist who visited the home on a weekly basis. Girls as young as 11 were routinely and sometimes without any initial medical assessment, given antidepressants, sedatives and anti-psychotic medication. This served to control their behaviour, placing them in a constant stupor and restricted their ability to communicate or to learn. The drugs put them at risk of numerous side effects, many of which were distressing.

The drugs also increased the girls' vulnerability to emotional, physical and in a smaller number of cases, sexual abuse. For almost every girl who lived there, Kendall House was a frightening, violent and unpredictable place to live.

With only one exception, every former resident who spoke with us experienced being placed, sometimes forcibly in a locked room. Isolated from their peers, and often heavily sedated, they could be kept in this room for days on end. Every former resident we spoke with witnessed others being placed in this room. On at least two occasions, girls were placed in straitjackets; these and others were threatened with transfer to a local mental health hospital. In some cases, threats were enacted, and girls were admitted to an adult ward of the hospital before returning to the home, often traumatised.

Kendall House was an institution which had weak governance and oversight.

Committees assigned with this responsibility demonstrated little curiosity, challenge or questioning. Members accepted the views of those in charge of the home at face

value, and sought to defend them on the rare occasions when concerns about aspects of the regime were brought to their attention.

Concerns about the medication regime at Kendall House were first raised during the 1970s and 1980s by a small number of residents and their parents, by some social workers and by some employees. All were either ignored, rebuked, ridiculed or belittled by those in positions of authority in the home. A TV documentary criticising practices in the home was broadcast in 1980. This generated a volume of associated negative press attention. The repercussions of this, and the other individually raised concerns did not lead to changes in the regime at the home.

Kendall House was first subject to formal regulatory inspection in 1984 and only then were many aspects of the regime challenged and some changes made. It was re-inspected at the end of 1985, and whilst some improvements had been made, concerns about the use of medication and the use of a locked isolation room for residents remained.

Some years after the home closed, allegations of abuse there were raised by a former resident. These concerns were raised with people in the dioceses, the police and other bodies. Further allegations by other former residents were also made in the years that followed. The dioceses advised the former resident to inform the police of her allegations, in accordance with their policies at the time.

For many former residents, their experiences at Kendall House have produced damaging life-long effects. These are both emotional and physical and include an inability to trust others, to form relationships, a lack of confidence and having to live with a range of anxieties and fears, many of which have a physical impact on their

daily lives. A small number of former residents went on to attempt suicide after living there.

Recommendations

The review panel has made 19 recommendations for the dioceses to address.

It is important that those in senior positions in the Dioceses of Rochester and Canterbury today take all necessary steps to ensure implementation of the recommendations of this review.

We have produced a further 8 recommendations for all dioceses and the Church of England National Safeguarding Team.

Conclusion

The Dioceses of Rochester and Canterbury should take this opportunity to respond with humility to this report, to provide a full apology and seek the forgiveness of all who suffered and who continue to suffer as a result of their experiences at Kendall House. Further, they should do everything possible to ensure such events never happen again.

Bishop James then issued an apology on behalf of the Dioceses of Canterbury and Rochester.

He said, "I am very grateful to Professor Proctor and her panel for the work they have done. I was deeply disturbed by the contents of their report. I am truly sorry that former residents were hurt and damaged by the actions of people at Kendall House who should have been providing them with a nurturing environment, care and

support. I am appalled and saddened to learn of the pain they have suffered both whilst in care and later, when dealing with the impact that being resident at Kendall House has had on their lives.

It is very clear from the report that in many respects what happened at Kendall House fell far short of what should have been. The report makes clear that a significant contributory factor was the woeful lack of oversight by the dioceses of Canterbury and Rochester and by a number of other authorities who should also have acted in the best interests of the young women in their care. I know that no apologies will take away the pain that has been caused. But on behalf of the Diocese of Rochester, I apologise wholeheartedly for that.

The report includes a number of recommendations. In relation to those addressed to the dioceses, both Bishop Trevor and I accept those recommendations and will be working with colleagues in our dioceses and elsewhere to ensure their implementation.

Above all, we must do all we can to ensure that dreadful situations like this will not happen again to vulnerable people in any part of the Church.

To the former residents, I thank you for your courage and perseverance in bringing these matters to our attention, and I apologise unreservedly for the harm that was done to you.

Finally, Bishop Trevor said,

“The opening of Kendall House in the 1920s presented the Dioceses of Canterbury and Rochester with an opportunity to improve the lives of the young women who came through its doors. It is clear that we in the Church failed in our oversight and that abusive practices were permitted to prevail at Kendall House for many years. We know that words cannot undo the failings of the past, but I would like to echo both Bishop James’ apology to former residents of Kendall House and his thanks to them for their courage in contributing to this report. I am aware that without change such words may seem empty and I want to assure all those affected that we take the recommendations of the report very seriously and will act on them as quickly and effectively as possible.”

The Rt Rev Paul Butler lead Bishop for national safeguarding issues a statement which read:

The findings of the independent review into Kendall House describe the harrowing regime experienced by numerous girls and young teenagers who were placed into the care of this Church of England home. The appalling standards of care and treatment should never have been allowed and on behalf of the national church I apologise unreservedly to all the former residents whose lives were and continue to be affected by their damaging experiences at Kendall House.

The considerations for the national Church contained in the report will be examined carefully and there is full commitment to ensuring that this leads to the best possible

implementation. The report will be shared with senior staff, including all diocesan bishops, across the whole Church.

There are serious lessons to be learnt from this Review both at diocesan and national level to ensure that this never happens again.”

ENDS

CONTACT Lindy Mackenzie: lindy.mackenzie@rochester.anglican.org 01634 560000